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MUSICAL STUDIES

FRANCIS HUEFFER

MUSICAL STUDIES.

Ballantyne Press
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EDINBURGH AND LONDON

MUSICAL STUDIES

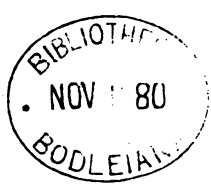
A Series of Contributions

BY

FRANCIS HUEFFER

AUTHOR OF

"RICHARD WAGNER AND THE MUSIC OF THE FUTURE," ETC.



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PREFACE.

THE character of this book is sufficiently explained by its title. It is, and pretends to be, nothing but a collection of articles on various musical topics republished from the newspapers and magazines in each case specified. In order to preserve their temporary character, alterations of the contents, and even of the form, of the essays have been, with few exceptions, purposely avoided. Whether their republication is warranted by the matter and manner of these essays it is not my province to decide. But to those who object on principle to the perpetuation in book form of such fugitive pieces—and the author himself is not wholly free from such a prejudice—it may be answered, that the present volume is part of an unmistakable movement in modern literature. The vast development of periodical publications within the last quarter of a century has drawn the best literary and scientific workers into its vortex. Few

authors nowadays can withstand the temptation of the immediate and vast publicity conferred by the prestige of a first-class Review; fewer can materially afford to give years of, in most cases, ill-requited labour to the composition of a book. Books, in the proper sense of the word, that is, organisms developed from a central idea, are in consequence becoming rarer and rarer in our literature, and collections of essays take their place. The influence of such a system on the reading public is too obvious to require explanation, supply and demand following the same law of reciprocity in literature as in other merchandise. If even illustrious scientific men give way to this general tendency of the age, the musical critic may claim the same indulgence for his modest offering. The æsthetical literature regarding music in this country is indeed so scanty, and so wholly out of proportion with the general and serious interest of late taken in the art, that any earnest and conscientious discussion of musical topics should not be wholly unwelcome. And to those two epithets, if to no others, the author believes his work to be entitled.

Before concluding these remarks, it is necessary to add a word of explanation as to the appearance in a book of musical essays of an article on Schopen-

hauer, the pessimist philosopher. Schopenhauer is, amongst the numerous German metaphysicians, the only one who has said anything worth listening to about music, and in whose system the art plays a prominent, one may say, vital part. Moreover, the results of his speculations have been essentially adopted by the greatest living composer, Richard Wagner. In these days, when it has become a common affectation to speak of music as a science, and when the monstrous proposition is started that composers, as composers, would be benefited by knowing the exact number of vibrations required for a particular note, musicians and amateurs may not unfairly be expected to show some interest in the metaphysical questions connected with the art.

THE AUTHOR.

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MUSICAL STUDIES.

THAYER'S BEETHOVEN.[1]

(From the *Times*, January 6, 1880.)

THE Life of Beethoven by Mr. A. W. Thayer is a curiosity of literature. Although written by an American in English, it has never been published in that language, and reasonable doubts may be entertained whether, at least in its present form, it ever will be. As regards research and treatment, it is, indeed, to all intents and purposes, a German book. In musical biography a school has sprung up recently in Germany, of which the late Professor Jahn was at once the founder and the most celebrated member, and which at present is represented by Herr Chrysander, the historian of Handel, and other writers. The great merit, and, indeed, the vital principle of

[1] Ludwig van Beethoven's Leben. By Alexander Wheelock Thayer. Vols. I.–III. Berlin, Weber.

this school, is minute and accurate research, accompanied, unfortunately, by the inability to sift and clearly group the details thus laboriously collected. In consequence, the books of these authors are extremely valuable sources of information, but they are anything but lively reading. Jahn's Mozart, more especially, is a marvellous accumulation of minute knowledge, of which Schindler, Beethoven's humble friend and biographer, used to say that it carefully recorded the name of every waiter who had helped Mozart to a cup of coffee. Thayer, who is in a certain sense a pupil of Jahn, and has inherited his materials for a biography of Beethoven, goes much further than his master. He will give a long description of a theatre, with the name of every actor and actress engaged in it, not because it is known that Beethoven was in the habit of visiting it, but merely because there is no proof to the contrary.

It is in this way that we are treated to a history of an abortive scheme of a national theatre (not an opera) founded by the Elector Maximilian Frederick at Bonn, for the reason that Beethoven, as a boy, at one time had to accompany songs and ballads "at rehearsals, possibly even at the performances." Again, long documents in Latin and German have been unearthed at enormous trouble from the archives and are printed *in extenso*, which have

not the remotest connection with Beethoven; while, again, pages after pages are filled with lists of the various archiepiscopal orchestras, of some of which the young master was, and of some of which he was not, a member. And the only reward the reader may expect for wading through this mass of irrelevant matter is a short entry in a kind of moral catalogue of all the Court musicians, to the effect that "Ludwig Beethoven, a son of the Beethoven sub No. 8, receiving no salary, is of good capacity, still young, of good quiet conduct, and poor." "Beethoven sub No. 8" in the same document is said to have "a dilapidated voice; he has been long in the service, is very poor, of tolerable conduct, and married"—a very lenient description of the drunken musician whose dissipations cast a deep gloom over the great master's early youth. If Mr. Thayer had given us a picture of this youth, including as many details as even he could wish for, our admiration for his zeal and carefulness of research would be unbounded. Unfortunately he has *les défauts de ses vertus* in a more than ordinary degree, and our feeling of gratitude is not a little damped by the trouble of having to pick valuable scraps of information from an entire local history of Bonn under the last spiritual rulers of the See of Cologne.

Not that this history is in itself without points of interest. Joseph Clement and Clement Augustus,

Maximilian Frederick and Maximilian Francis, the son of the great Empress Maria Theresa and the patron of Beethoven, are typical figures in the history of the eighteenth century. Their ecclesiastical vows sat very lightly upon them. They had their palaces, and diminutive armies, and theatres, and courtiers, and mistresses after the model of the *Grand Monarque*, and in the budget of Clement Augustus—who by the way literally danced himself to death—the modest sum of 4716 thalers devoted *ad pias causas* figures by the side of 50,966 thalers for "Plaisiranschaffungen," or various kinds of pleasures. But in spite of this, the Archbishops of Cologne were, upon the whole, beneficent, tolerant, and in their way even enlightened rulers, and the traditions of their merry and prosperous times are even yet alive on the left bank of the Rhine, especially at Bonn itself, which was the favourite residence of the Electors. Long before Coleridge shuddered at the multitudinous odours of Cologne, Bonn was described by another English traveller as "a charming, neatly-built town with well-paved streets." One of the chief amusements of the Electors was, from an early period, music, and a considerable part of the item "Plaisiranschaffungen" may be set down to the keeping up of an excellent orchestra and a more or less efficient *troupe* of operatic singers. Joseph Clement (1689-1724) was himself an amateur of some pretensions

and he beguiled the weary days of his exile in France by musical composition. Of the nature of this he himself gives an account too curious to be passed over in silence. At the risk of being charged with the fault deprecated by us in Mr. Thayer, we must quote the opening sentences of a letter, written in the most extraordinary German ever seen, and addressed to the Elector's dear Court Councillor Rauch:—

"It may appear preposterous that an ignoramus who knows nothing of music should venture to compose. But this has happened to me; for I herewith send you eleven motets and compositions which I have set myself in a very curious manner. For, not knowing the notes or music in the least, I am compelled to hum whatever comes into my head to a musical composer, who then commits it to paper. I must, however, have a good ear and taste, for the public have always approved my music when they have heard it. My method has always been that of the bees which suck honey from the sweetest flowers and collect it; even so, all I have composed is taken from the good masters whose music pleases me."

The list of royal and princely amateurs, from the days of King David to those of the author of "Santa Chiara," performed some years ago at Covent Garden, is a long and a not undistinguished one. But the calm assertion of sovereign rights over other people's artistic property contained in the above is, we believe, unprecedented.

It is among the Court musicians of Joseph Clement's successor, Clement Augustus, that the name of Beethoven occurs for the first time. It was borne by the composer's grandfather, called, like him, Ludwig van Beethoven, who came to Bonn in 1732, having, according to an old family tradition, quarrelled with his parents at Antwerp. The family, it may be parenthetically mentioned, can be traced to a village near Louvain, in Belgium, and the name is of frequent occurrence in the Low Countries. Schindler saw it in 1840 over a grocer's shop at Maestricht. The Ludwig we are speaking of was in 1733 appointed Court musician to the Elector, and married in September of the same year. Johann van Beethoven, his second son, the exact date of whose birth even Mr. Thayer has been unable to discover, followed his father's calling, and in due course his name appears among the Court musicians, most frequently at the bottom of "humble and submissive" petitions for increased pay. It may by some be thought characteristic of the man's weak nature that he seems unable to make up his mind as to his own name. At one time he writes Biethoffen, which an official copyist improves into Piethoffen, at another Bethoff, and again Bethoven, and Beethoven with and without the "van." Baillie, the Covenanter, immortalised by Mr. Carlyle, laboured under the same weakness, and the eighteenth century,

as well as the seventeenth, was remarkable for its latitude in matters orthographic. At the same time it remains a fact that old Ludwig, an honourable man and citizen, seems to have been invariably consistent in the matter, while his dissipated son was not.

But he has graver faults than this to answer for. It seems uncertain whether in the education of his great son he was a harder taskmaster than circumstances required. Young Ludwig was no doubt difficult to deal with. Self-willed, and looking upon art from his own point of view, the ordinary routine of musical training was highly distasteful to him. Moreover he was not precocious as a composer—not, at least, compared with Mozart or Handel; and if the statement on his first published composition, "Par un jeune amateur, Louis van Beethoven, agé dix ans," had been true (he was in reality more than twelve years old), there would have been nothing surprising in the fact. The same statement, for which no doubt the father is responsible, subsequently led to much chronological confusion; and the composer himself for a long time believed that the year of his birth was 1772 instead of 1770. It is but too certain that the drudgery to which he was compelled from early youth and the misery of his home life fostered the germs of suspicion and misanthropy which are so painful a feature in his character. The child here also was father to the man.

But all was not sad in Beethoven's early life. The beautiful surroundings of Bonn, the Rhine, and the Seven Hills were a source of ever-new and never-to-be-forgotten pleasure to the future author of the "Pastoral Symphony," in whom love of nature was a transcendent passion. Moreover, he was not without kind and appreciative friends. Beethoven was not what in the ordinary sense is called an educated man, and the total neglect of his general culture is, perhaps, the most unpardonable of his father's sins. No amount of thought or careful, though miscellaneous, study in later life could make up for this want, and as soon as Beethoven abandons the accustomed staff for ordinary note paper, we perceive the illiterate hand. But, in spite of this, he loved the intercourse of cultured people—too frequently shunned by musicians—and this he found in the houses of some of the best families in Bonn.

Some of the early friendships thus contracted ceased only with his life. Thus Stephen von Breuning, one of his earliest friends, was also among the chief mourners at his funeral. It was in the Breuning family that Beethoven became acquainted, not only with the works of Lessing and Gleim and the early productions of Goethe, but also with Shakespeare and Milton and Sterne, in such translations as were then very popular in Germany. Mr. Thayer seems inclined to think that the great master's well-

known predilection for England and everything English may be traced to his early acquaintance with the standard works of our literature.

A few incidents of Beethoven's youth not generally known may be mentioned here. One of the pleasantest among these was the trip from Bonn to Mergentheim, undertaken by the chief members of the Bonn orchestra to enliven the *villeggiatura* of their master. The route lay through the most charming parts of the Rhineland, the beauties of which could be enjoyed at leisure from the comfortable boats slowly gliding up the river. The ship's company immediately constituted itself a body politic, and accordingly elected a king, who forthwith appointed his courtiers and State dignitaries. Beethoven received the modest post of Court scullion, which he filled to general satisfaction. At Aschaffenburg, since become famous through a battle fought there in 1866, a halt was made, and here, in the presence of the learned Abbé Sterkel, the scullion had to show his proficiency in the more difficult art of pianoforte playing, his talent for improvisation being especially admired. We may add here, that all through life Beethoven retained this marvellous gift of spontaneous production. The opinions as to his merits as a pianist differ widely; and especially in later life, when deafness prevented him from hearing himself, his touch naturally lost much of its tenderness and

refinement; but all critics agree in their accounts of the overpowering impression produced in every heart as soon as the master closed the book and listened to the inner voice which remained audible to him in spite of physical ailment. The trip to Mergentheim — since celebrated in song by the Rhenish poet, Alexander Kaufmann—lived in Beethoven's memory as "a fruitful source of the most beautiful images."

Another interesting and infinitely more important journey was undertaken to Vienna in 1787, several years before Beethoven made that city his permanent abode. Very little of this trip is known beyond the fact that Beethoven received a few lessons from Mozart. Schindler relates that the only two persons permanently impressed on the young artist's mind were the Emperor Joseph II. and Mozart—a statement which, with regard to the former, Mr. Thayer seems inclined to doubt for chronological reasons; for the date of Beethoven's short stay at Vienna seems to coincide with the Emperor's celebrated journey to the Crimea in company with Catherine II. of Russia. Mozart on this occasion is credited with one of those prophecies of future greatness which several musicians are said to have uttered of their immediate successors. When Hasse produced his last opera at Milan in 1771, a work by Mozart called "Ascanio in Alba" was also given, and the veteran

composer is said to have exclaimed, "This child will throw us all into oblivion!" and similarly, when "the child," grown up to be the greatest composer of the age, heard young Beethoven play, he said in a whisper to some friend, "Listen to him; he will make the world talk!" According to Ries, however, Beethoven complained that Mozart would never play to him. The young artist's first contact with another great master also belongs to the Bonn period.

In December 1790 Haydn journeyed to London in company with Salomon, the violinist and *entrepreneur*, for whose concerts some of Haydn's finest symphonies, known as the "Salomon set," were written. Salomon being a native of Bonn, a halt was naturally made in that pleasant town, where the great composer was received with due honour by the art-loving Elector. Mr. Thayer tells a pretty anecdote in connection with a dinner given by Haydn, on the ground that Beethoven may possibly have been among the guests. However that may be, it cannot be doubted that the promising young musician attracted Haydn's attention; and we know for certain that on his return journey in June 1792, Haydn took kind notice of a cantata submitted to him by Beethoven, and "encouraged the author to persevere in his studies." Not many months later Beethoven was in Vienna as Haydn's regular pupil, studying composition and occasionally paying for his

master's coffee and chocolate, if the minute entries in his diary may be believed. That the relations between master and pupil were not altogether satisfactory is a matter of history. Beethoven, self-willed and passionate, was at best a somewhat unmanageable pupil, and, moreover, the natures of the two composers were fundamentally different—as different as the tempest-tossed ocean is from the quiet surface of a lake. Haydn, from his own point of view, was no doubt right in counselling moderation, but Beethoven was certainly not wrong in not always implicitly following that advice, although it can only be explained from his soured and naturally suspicious nature that he accused Haydn of having tried to keep him back on purpose. Certain it is that (according to Ries) Beethoven refused to describe himself as a "pupil of Haydn" on the title-pages of his early works, because, as he bluntly put it, "I never learned anything from him." Mr. Thayer's first volume (384 closely printed pages) concludes with Beethoven's second year at Vienna; at a time, that is, before his real career as a composer had begun. That all the important facts might have been comprised in a quarter of that space it is needless to add. But instead of a succinct account of Beethoven's youth, the author gives us a miscellaneous collection of documents bearing on the history of Bonn, and in this tendency he has, unfortunately, been encouraged

by his translator, a resident of Bonn, and brimful of local information, which he is as eager to divulge as Mr. Thayer himself. By their united efforts the volume has become totally unfit, at least, for the English reader, and of this, be it said in justice to Mr. Thayer, he is well aware.

In the second and third volumes Beethoven's work and character gain in importance, and he accordingly more and more engrosses the author's interest, much to the benefit of the work, it need not be said. At the very outset of the second volume Mr. Thayer refrains from using his rich "materials for an account of musical life in Prague," although Beethoven actually once paid a short visit to that city, and to his virtuous resolve he remains in the main faithful throughout the work. There is still an enormous mass of detail, but it at least refers to Beethoven and his immediate surroundings. The years of which these two volumes treat (1796–1816) comprise the rise and the acme of Beethoven's career as far as fame and external prosperity are concerned. As a virtuoso he remained almost without a rival until his increasing deafness prevented him from distinguishing the *nuances* of his own performance, and as a composer also his supreme greatness was very generally acknowledged. It is somewhat distressing to find that his popularity, in the common sense of the word, was due, not to his master-works, but

to his weakest production—a battle symphony celebrating the victory of Wellington at Vittoria, and full of noisy and more or less commonplace devices —a *pièce d'occasion*, in fact, and quite unworthy of Beethoven. However, the master's great works had the full benefit of this spring-tide of popular favour. Publishers eagerly asked for compositions from his pen, his "academies" (the Viennese name for orchestral and choral concerts) were thronged by admiring crowds, and every new work produced was a new triumph; even "Fidelio," passed over with neglect in the troublous year 1805, was on its revival in a reconstructed form received with enthusiasm. This was in 1814. At the Congress of Vienna, which assembled in the same year, Beethoven was the observed of all observers—musical observers at least —and had every opportunity of asserting his artistic independence—sometimes in an anything but dignified manner—in the company of the potentates and greatest statesmen of Europe. And, what is more, he still possessed in those days the elasticity and freshness of mind necessary for the enjoyment of a life of this kind. It is true that at all times the bias of his nature was the reverse of cheerful, and the great tragic misfortune of his life, his deafness, had at the period we speak of already reached an almost hopeless stage.

As early as 1802 Beethoven, in a fit of despon-

dency, wrote the last will in which, in language almost too painful to quote, he deplores his cruel fate. "Oh, men," he exclaims, "you who think or declare me unsympathetic, wilful, or misanthropic, how unjust you are! You do not know the secret cause of what appears to you in that light. . . . Born with a lively, impressionable temper, susceptible to the pleasures of society, I had at an early age to seclude myself and pass my life alone. If at times I tried to forget all this, oh! how doubly sad was the experience of my imperfect hearing which repelled me again; and yet I could not tell people—Speak louder, shout, for I am deaf!" For a long time, however, Beethoven did not abandon the hope of ultimate recovery, and the Berlin Library contains a melancholy collection of speaking-trumpets and similar instruments used by him with little or no result. But in spite of his deafness and of many other causes of trouble, it is certain that up to about 1816, the year which concludes Mr. Thayer's third volume, Beethoven, if not exactly a happy man, was at least a prosperous man, and one able and inclined to enjoy the good things fortune had thrown in his path.

The great anxiety and sorrow of his later years dates from about the time we speak of. Beethoven's brother died, leaving a boy unprovided for and a widow morally and intellectually unfit to take care

of her child. From her influence the composer had to withdraw his nephew by means of a lawsuit, and henceforth the entire care of the boy's education devolved upon him. Here at last he had found an object for his affection, and his nephew Carl became the centre of his private life. For his sake he was prepared to abandon his bachelor habits and take to housekeeping, with what results his diaries are still in existence to prove. For his benefit, also, Beethoven developed that passion for acquiring and hoarding money which becomes too conspicuous in the letters and business transactions of his later years, and which is little in accord with the open-handed generosity of his youth and early manhood. Unfortunately, the young man did not prove worthy of all this affection, and his conduct caused grief and anxiety to his uncle. No wonder that his natural tendency towards suspicion and misanthropy grew more and more upon the lonely man, and that in the course of years he became a Timon in the gayest city of the world, seen by few, fully understood, perhaps, by none. But the more he retired from the world, the more his inner life seemed to expand and develop. A more strange, and in its way a more sublime, phenomenon cannot be found in the history of art than this elderly man, perfectly deaf and all but a hermit, communing as it were with another world, and pouring forth ever-new creations, the beauty

and the depth of which it has taken the world half a century to comprehend fully. For we need not add that the Ninth Symphony, the "Missa Solemnis," the last sonatas and quartets, and other works of Beethoven's "third manner," belong one and all to the period we speak of. To obtuse contemporaries many of these appeared to be the emanations of declining powers further impeded by deafness; to modern musicians they are the highest effort made by their art, and at the same time the basis of all further development.

It is not our present purpose to write the biography of Beethoven, or to follow Mr. Thayer through the mazes of his careful investigation. All we can do is to mention a few detached points on which essentially new light is thrown by the volumes before us, and which have never been fully discussed. One of these is the sentimental aspect of Beethoven's life, his relations to women, to which Mr. Thayer, very properly, has paid careful attention. Beethoven, like Handel, was never married, but celibacy was with him by no means a matter of principle. "My best wishes to your wife," he writes to his pupil Ries in 1816; "unfortunately I have none; I found One only, and her I have no chance of ever calling mine; but for that reason I am not a hater of women." "One only" is a favourite phrase with lovers; but in Beethoven's, as in other

cases, it should not be taken literally. Not only was he, as his early friend Wegeler remarks, "*nie ohne eine Liebe*" — that is, never without a love affair—but this love in more than one case took the more serious form of an offer of marriage, not to speak of such transitory attacks of *amour de tête* as that which dictated the celebrated letters to Bettina von Arnim, Goethe's friend.

But among the various objects of Beethoven's affection one has been surrounded by popular fancy and sentimental writers with all the glamour of romance. It is the beautiful Giulietta, Countess Guicciardi, to whom the C sharp minor sonata ("The Moonlight"), one of Beethoven's most impassioned works, is dedicated, and it must be admitted that she is well worthy to fill the place assigned to her by common consent. Giulietta Guicciardi was at the time the master made her acquaintance in her seventeenth year, Beethoven being rather less than twice her age. By all accounts she is described as a fascinating young lady, as beautiful as she was intelligent, and, moreover, an ardent and accomplished lover of music. No wonder that such a girl, placed towards him in the dangerous position of an admiring pupil, should have kindled the inflammable heart of the composer. Various facts and conjectures tend to show that Beethoven offered Giulietta his hand, which she was willing to accept. Her father, how-

ever, opposed the match, and to his remonstrances the daughter yielded and married two years later (in 1803) Count Gallenberg, an *impresario*, and prolific composer of ballet-music and the like. That Beethoven, apart from any deeper feeling of regret, was indignant at being superseded by such a rival it is needless to add, and the echo of that indignation is audible in a conversation between him and Schindler, eighteen years later. The friends being at a public place, "where Beethoven did not like to trust the voice," the conversation took place in writing, and has, therefore, been literally preserved to us. As a further precaution, or for some other reason, the composer wrote his answers in the curious French peculiar to him, and which in this instance does not add to the clearness of his explanation:—"J'étais bien aimé d'elle," he writes, "et plus que jamais son époux. Il était plutôt son amant que moi, mais par elle j'apprenais de son misère et je trouvais un homme de bien qui me donnait la somme de 500 florins pour le soulager. Il était toujours mon ennemi, c'était justement la raison que je fusse (*sic*) tout le bien que possible. . . . Elle était née Guicciardi. Elle était l'épouse de lui avant son voyage en Italie —arrivé à Vienne elle cherchait moi pleurant, mais je la méprisois."

To what period or particular incident the last remark refers, neither Schindler nor Mr. Thayer tries

to explain. Certain it is that no man would after eighteen years speak in these terms of subdued bitterness of a mere passing affection, such as the last-named author is inclined to discover in the whole affair. Schindler was of a different opinion; he was, and upon the whole not unreasonably, inclined to recognise in Giulietta Guicciardi the ideal of Beethoven's life and the inspiring muse of some of his finest compositions. This opinion received apparent confirmation from an event which happened immediately after Beethoven's death. In a secret drawer, where the composer kept his bank shares, were found three letters, or more correctly a letter with two postscripts scrawled in pencil on two sheets of notepaper. Whether they had never been sent to the person addressed, or returned by her, is an open question. The name of that person is not stated; neither place nor year is given; the only date is "July 6, morning," and on the first postscript "Monday, July 6, evening." The letter appeared in English many years ago, but it is so interesting and so different from Beethoven's ordinary clumsy style of writing, that a translation of the first portion at least may well claim a place here. In it Beethoven's tongue seems untied by his passion, and he becomes eloquent in his incoherent elementary way :—

"My angel, my all, my self,—A few words only to-day in pencil—your pencil" (*mit Deinem*, the *Du* being used through-

out the original); "only till to-morrow is my lodging fixed; what miserable waste of time! Why this deep grief when necessity speaks? Can our love exist except by sacrifice, by not demanding all; can you help not being quite mine, I not quite yours? Ah! God, look into beautiful Nature, and calm your mind over what must be. Love demands all and justly, so it is from me to you, from you to me; only you forget too often that I must live for myself and for you. If we were quite united, you would feel this grief no more than I. . . . My journey was terrible; I did not arrive till four in the morning; for want of sufficient horses, the mail-coach chose a different route, and what a terrible road! At the last station they warned me not to travel at night and frightened me with a wood; but that only tempted me, and I was wrong. The carriage could not but collapse in the terrible road, bottomless, a mere country road; but for my postilions I should have stuck there. . . . Now quickly from the external to the internal. We shall probably see one another soon, and to-day I cannot tell you the thoughts I had regarding my life during these few days. Were our hearts but always close together I should have none such. My heart is full; I have much to say to you. Oh! there are moments when I find that language is nothing. Be cheerful; remain my faithful sole treasure, my all, as I am yours; the rest the gods must send, what shall be and must be.—Your faithful LUDWIG."

Schindler jumps to the conclusion that this "angel," this "immortal love," as he calls her in the further course of the letter, is Giulietta Guicciardi, and his view has been cheerfully accepted and further improved upon by other writers and Beethoven enthusiasts, more or less romantically inclined.

This faith has at last been rudely shaken by Mr. Thayer. He is a man of facts, and, as such, hates romance, however harmless. It is, indeed, with evi-

dent satisfaction that he scatters the Guicciardi myth to the winds. He proceeds in the most methodical manner, admits that the letter may well have been written in Hungary, because it mentions the initial of a neighbouring post-town, "K" (and "of the 218 places in the Austrian Directory which begin with a K there are several in Hungary"), and adduces no end of collateral evidence in favour of his argument. Unfortunately his strongest proof, the chronological, breaks down almost completely. It turns out that of all the years which, according to Mr. Thayer, need be taken into consideration, 1807 is the only one in which July 6th fell on a Monday. But the author himself proves that for other reasons this cannot have been the year, and therefore settles on 1806 (when Giulietta was at Naples), assuming that Beethoven, in dating his letter, made a mistake of one day. But if this be admitted, there is no reason why the error should not have been one of two or more days, and the chronological argument thus falls to the ground. There is, indeed, by Mr. Thayer's own showing, no absolutely cogent reason why the letter should not have been written in 1802, before Giulietta Guicciardi had become Countess Gallenberg and had left Vienna. It is different if Mr. Thayer has substantial reasons for the claims of his own pretender, the Countess Theresa of Brunswick, to whom also a celebrated sonata is dedicated. But for the present

the evidence in her favour is more or less conjectural, and the "immortal love" of the letter remains an enigma.

Another interesting subject to which Mr. Thayer has given much attention is his hero's relations to this country. Beethoven, as we remarked before, was an admirer of England and of everything English. He celebrated Wellington's victory of Vittoria by a symphony, and according to one account the Dead March in the "Eroica" was originally inspired by the rumour of Nelson's death in the battle of the Nile. Careful study of the British Constitution is said to have cured him of his early Republicanism. One is happy to be able to say that this affection was mutual. England was foremost among countries —including the composer's own—to acknowledge Beethoven's merits, and by a curious chance it was given to Leicester to hear perhaps the first notes of his music ever sounded in our island. At the general flight from Bonn before the Republican troops, a certain Abbé Dobbeler was commissioned to accompany to Hamburg the Hon. Mrs. Bowater, an old English lady, who had for years lived on the Continent and acquired a refined musical taste. The Abbé, having invested some money in English stocks, was easily persuaded to continue his journey to Leicester, where Mrs. Bowater took up her residence for a time, and he being an excellent violinist, music became the conso-

lation of his exile. Mr. William Gardiner, who tells the story, affords us a curious glimpse of provincial still-life of the eighteenth century. On a rainy day the Abbé would send him a note to this effect: "As the day is good for nothing but a dinner and music, Mrs. Bowater hopes for your company at four and a quartet in the evening." Musical *noctes cœnæque deorum* always followed such an invitation. Among the works which Abbé Dobbeler had brought with him from Bonn was a trio by Beethoven, which was received with enthusiasm by the amateurs; and thus it came to pass that his genius was acknowledged at Leicester, while Vienna knew him only as the humble pupil of Haydn. Again, his Opus 1—the well-known trios—was soon after its appearance received with acclamation by Cramer, Watts the tenor, Lindley, and other London musicians.

Among these was Bridgetower, the violinist, who afterwards played a somewhat conspicuous part in Beethoven's career. He was the son of a negro and a Polish lady, and it is not known how he came by his English name. But having lived in London, where his father was known as the "Abyssinian Prince," he was during his stay at Vienna generally accepted as an Englishman, and to that qualification very likely owed his friendly reception on the part of Beethoven. For him the celebrated sonata for

violin and pianoforte, known as the Kreuzer Sonata, was originally written, and he played it with the composer to the latter's great satisfaction, if we may believe the virtuoso's own testimony. Another witness gives a very different account. "Bridgetower," he writes, "was a mulatto, and played in a very extravagant style. When he performed the sonata with Beethoven it was received with laughter." Afterwards Beethoven quarrelled with Bridgetower —according to him, "about a girl"—and the sonata was dedicated to the Paris violinist whose name it bears.

Another Englishman with whom Beethoven's relations were not altogether cordial was Major-General Kyd, a musical enthusiast, but, like other enthusiasts, apparently somewhat wanting in tact. He called on Beethoven and offered him £100 for a symphony, unfortunately coupling his proposal with the condition that it should be written in his earlier and simpler manner; whereat the exasperated composer "kicked him downstairs," to use his own emphatic, and, it must be hoped, figurative language. But the unfavourable impression of our national taste was soon effaced by the substantial services rendered to Beethoven's fame by such men as Neate, Sir George Smart, and other English musicians, who were among the first to recognise the rising genius.

Of these, and of the initiative taken by the Philharmonic Society in the same noble cause, we had recently occasion to speak. The recollection of these facts is an honour—it ought also to be a warning—to the old-established institution last alluded to. Beethoven was not a "classic" when the Philharmonic Society produced and even commissioned his works, and by that bold policy secured its leading position among London concert institutes and its permanent place in the history of English music. A society which looks persistently back to the past, and severs itself from the living currents of artistic life, writes its own death-warrant.

This leads us to say a few final words of Beethoven's works and their influence on modern art—a subject from which Mr. Thayer modestly and, upon the whole, wisely keeps aloof, his element being the unearthing of dates and facts rather than the congenial entering into great artistic impulses. Beethoven's works—especially those of his third and last period—have been judged differently by different men and at different times. But they have, beyond a doubt, become the basis of all that is essentially characteristic of modern art. When Schumann raised the banner of Romanticism, it was to Bach and Beethoven that he looked up as to his masters and models. Mendelssohn and, in our days, Brahms—masters of

abstract form though they be—would scarcely disown the influence of Beethoven's poetic aspiration. This aspiration, on the other hand, is held by their adherents to be consistently developed in the symphonic poems of Berlioz and of Liszt. Again, Wagner declares that instrumental art in its separate condition has reached its ultimate development in the Choral Symphony; and that, by having recourse to the spoken word in the final movement of that symphony, Beethoven pointed the way to the music drama as the consistent outgrowth of his reform. Whichever of these rival claims to the prophet's mantle may be just, it is certain that a mighty impulse was given to music, and it would be vain to deny that this impulse is essentially of the "poetic," as opposed to the formally musical, kind. Such a structure as the last movement of the Ninth Symphony, with its retrospective introduction of the preceding leading themes, cannot be explained on the basis of abstract music. And there are innumerable other instances of the same principle in Beethoven's last works. But who, it will be asked, is the right heir to this much-discussed "poetic idea," which the master bequeathed to future ages? The only answer we can give is that whereby the cautious Jew Melchisedek evades Sultan Saladin's questions as to the true religion, in Boccaccio's story of the three

rings. There are three sons, and each declares that he has received the true miraculous ring from their common father. "Ciascuno la sua eredità, la sua vera legge, e i suoi comandamenti si crede avere a fare, ma chi se l' abbia, come degli aneli, ancora ne pende la questione."

CHOPIN.

(From the *Fortnightly Review*, September 1877.)

ONE of the most characteristic features in the portrait of Chopin, drawn by the master-hand of Franz Liszt, is the Polish composer's unconquerable aversion to correspondence. "It was curious," Liszt says, "to see him resort to all kinds of expedients to escape the necessity of tracing the most insignificant note. Many a time he traversed Paris from one end to the other to decline an invitation to dinner or to give some trivial information, rather than write a few lines. . . . His handwriting was quite unknown to most of his friends." The members of his family in Warsaw, and a few of his beautiful countrywomen, were almost the only persons in whose favour Chopin departed from this rule. In consequence mainly of this reticence, almost nothing had till lately transpired of the inner life of one of the most subjective of composers. Even the authentic data of his external career were scanty

and difficult of access, being mostly contained in works by Polish writers and in the Polish language. Liszt in the brochure already alluded to gives few facts, and those chiefly gleaned from his own personal intercourse with Chopin in Paris; the composer's earlier life, before he left his country, was covered by all but utter darkness.

Considerable expectation, therefore, was roused some weeks ago by the announcement of a new Life of Chopin written in German by a Pole, M. Karasowski, and founded chiefly on Chopin's letters to his family. Unfortunately, these expectations were to a great extent doomed to disappointment. M. Karasowski's book, although evincing great care and accuracy in the collection of facts, is written without literary skill, and even without sufficient knowledge of the language in which he tries to express himself. Moreover, a great and by far the most interesting portion of the letters, comprising all those written from Paris, has been destroyed by an accident to be related further on. Sufficient, however, remains to throw a new light on Chopin's early existence, and combining these new materials with such as may be gathered from various contemporary sources, a continuous narrative of the great musical lyrist's career may now be attempted. The outlines of such a biography I have tried to sketch in the present article. Through the kindness of Mr. A. J. Hipkins,

Sir Julius Benedict, and others, I have been enabled to add valuable and entirely new information with regard to Chopin's visit to England and Scotland shortly before his death.

The difficulties of Chopin's biographer begin before that composer's birth. Until quite recently he was believed to have been of purely French origin, a strange supposition with regard to one whose music reflects the peculiarities of the Polish nation in so striking a manner. Yet this statement was confidently made by that arch-blunderer Fétis, and repeated by other writers on the subject, not excluding even Liszt. Before the appearance of Karasowski's book, I was able to correct this mistake from Polish sources. In a musical contemporary I proved at some length that by the mother's side at least Chopin was descended from the old and noble family of the Krzyzanowskis, and that even the father's French nationality, although not his French birth, appears doubtful; for Nicolaus Chopin was born at Nancy, the old domain of Stanislas Leszczynski, and, according to one account, he was the grandson of a Polish courtier who had followed the fortunes of his king. This circumstance, of which, by the way, M. Karasowski does not seem to be aware, would at the same time account for his migration to Poland and the active part he took in the struggle of that country with

Russia. Chopin himself, it ought to be added, invariably and almost demonstratively pronounced his patriotic feeling. When he had to leave Warsaw in the pursuit of fame and gain, his heart remained behind, and even in Paris, his second home, he preferred the society of his countrymen and countrywomen to all others. His feelings and idiosyncrasies, his life, his bearing, and his art always remained Polish.

The Darwinian principle in music being thus vindicated, it is time for us to return to Chopin's birth. Here new difficulties and errors arise. On a watch presented by the great singer Catalani to Chopin in 1820, the words were engraved, "Donné par Madame Catalani à Frédéric Chopin, âgé de dix ans;" and in this manner another blunder was started on its journey through biographical dictionaries and magazine articles innumerable, down to the very tombstone at Père Lachaise, till at last reference to the official documents proved beyond a doubt that Madame Catalani had politely deducted one year from the real age of her young favourite, the date of the latter's birth being the 1st of March 1809. The scene of this event was on the same occasion transferred from Warsaw to the village of Zelazowa Wola, about six miles distant from that city. Chopin's father was at the time private tutor at the house of Count Frederick Skarbek, and after him the boy was named.

After having once settled the composer's birth, we can pass rapidly over his early youth. This youth was as happy and as quiet as can well be imagined. Chopin's parents lived in easy, though not exactly affluent circumstances, and the boy's education was carefully attended to by the best masters in Warsaw. But, more than all, the family were on terms of mutual love and consideration. Chopin's letters to his parents and sisters are full of the tenderest affection, and never during his splendid career in Paris did he cease to remember and regret the home of his childhood. Of his mother, one who knew him well—George Sand—used to say that she was his only genuine passion. Like most great musicians, Chopin showed a feeling for his art at a very early age, and his first attempts at composition were conceived long before his hand had learnt to trace notes or letters. An indulgent master had to jot down what the precocious pupil more indicated than actually played on the piano. His *début* as an executant the boy made in 1818 at a concert for the poor, when his astounding mastery over the instrument created a sensation and established his local fame on a firm basis. Foreign celebrities were invited to hear and admire the infant-miracle; hence, amongst other things, the timepiece of Catalani, fatal to chronology. A more important consequence of this early success was the

patronage of the art-loving and highly cultivated Polish aristocracy. The ladies of the great families the Czartoriskys, the Sapiechas, the Radzivils, delighted in fondling the gentle, beautiful boy, and in this manner Chopin began at an early age to breathe the air of the *salon*, which through life remained his most congenial atmosphere. The dangerous consequences of such surroundings were fortunately counteracted by Chopin's teacher, Elsner, an excellent musician, as strict in his artistic demands as he was free from pedantry. Moreover the boy's natural modesty sufficiently protected him from the dangers of indiscriminate applause.

There is a certain idyllic charm about Chopin's childhood such as we naturally connect with the early development of great lyrical powers. We may picture to ourselves a dreamy youth open to the beauties of sky and field and lonely woodside, but equally fond of congenial society, and taking keenest delight in his contact with refined womanhood. But enlivening traits are not wanting in this picture. A turn for practical jokes may be mentioned amongst them; "practical" in a very different sense from the robust interpretation of that word in which Smollett delighted, but frequently none the less amusing in their results. On one occasion Chopin composed an impertinent letter in a kind of pigeon-Polish, used by the Jewish pedlars, and sent

it to a nobleman, signed with the name of a poor Hebrew well known on the estate. The nobleman was known for his hastiness of temper, and a severe thrashing would have been the fate of the innocent Jew, but for Chopin's timely disclosure of his own authorship. The laugh raised at his cost is said to have cured the magnate of his besetting sin, and ever after he used the horsewhip rarely, and "only where it was necessary," as M. Karasowski cautiously adds.

An extraordinary gift of travestying personal peculiarities belongs to the same category. When quite a boy, Chopin astonished and amused his friends by imitating to the life and to the letter the gestures and the broken Polish of a German Protestant clergyman; and many years later he excited the envy of a great French actor by his incomparable imitations of various celebrated pianists, both with regard to personal bearing and artistic execution. Liszt especially, with his striking features and strongly pronounced individuality, was one of Chopin's favourite models, much to the amusement of the two friends. It is strange that this decidedly dramatic instinct should have found no equivalent in Chopin's art. An anecdote told of his early youth would confirm one's belief in the existence of latent dramatic power. To quiet his father's unruly pupils, Chopin is said to have improvised and illustrated on the piano a long story of robbers and housebreakers, with

such intensity as to rouse his audience to a pitch of excitement, and afterwards actually to send it to sleep by reciting how the thieves, after a successful expedition, rest in the security of a dense forest. Similar incidents—the readers of this Review may remember—are told of Schumann's early youth. And yet he also signally failed in those dramatic efforts which Chopin did not even venture upon.

Barring a few excursions into the country, where he revelled in air and sunshine and the songs of the people, Chopin's early youth was passed at home. His artistic career seems to have been determined upon from a very early period, but his general education was not neglected for that reason. Under the loving care of parents and sisters he grew up a well-educated, socially refined, and withal tender-hearted youth—too tender and sensitive, alas! for the ways of the world and the passions of his own heart, as we shall presently see.

His first journey was an important break of this eventless quietude. It was directed to Berlin, and might well be considered a somewhat formidable affair in those days of bottomless Polish roads and lumbering Prussian diligences. At Berlin, however, they arrived safely, Chopin and Professor Jarocki, a friend of the family, who went to the Prussian capital to be present at a congress of naturalists, and gladly took the part of guide and philosopher to the

inexperienced youth. To this journey we owe the first series of letters in Karasowski's book. Upon the whole, it must be confessed that those letters disappoint even moderate expectations. They may have lost much through the translator's want of skill; the pet names, the charming diminutives, and other graceful *fioriture* of affection in which the Polish language is so rich, moreover, defy reproduction. It is also unmistakable that Chopin is an intelligent and keen observer. He wanders about the streets of Berlin with his eyes open, noticing everything, from the colossal pile of the Königliche Schloss down to the *tournure* of the ladies, of which, by the way, he disapproves highly. Especially amusing is his strong objection to natural science and her representatives. There is a capital sketch of an absent-minded professor at the public dinner, who, in the heat of a learned discussion, drums with his not over-clean fingers on his neighbour's—Chopin's—plate, much to the disgust of that fastidious young gentleman. Here, then, was ample material for the satirist, and Chopin did not waste his opportunity. "Many of them," he says, "appear to me like caricatures, and I have already divided them into classes." Alexander von Humboldt, the courtier and man of the world, alone finds favour in his eyes. "He looks very different," we hear; and "he spoke French to us as well as if it were his

own language; even you, dear father, would have said so."

But all this, amusing as it is, might have been written by almost any clever boy. And the same remark applies with some modifications to all his subsequent letters, as far as they have been preserved to us. The signature of Chopin appended to them adds little to their significance; that is, we find none of the composer's qualities in his words. This is the more remarkable as Chopin belongs essentially to what may be called the literary or poetic epoch of music. The representatives of this epoch wielded, and wield, the author's as well as the composer's pen. The names of Schumann, of Liszt, of Wagner, are sufficient to illustrate the point. But Chopin in this respect belongs to the earlier class of musicians, who were, and wished to be, nothing but musicians. On the other hand—and this increases our surprise—he was by no means wanting in education and even scholarly attainments. Mozart and Schubert, and to some extent even Beethoven, could not venture on literary grounds, had their desire been ever so strong. But Chopin had been trained by a father who was at the same time a careful and accomplished pedagogue, and during the latter part of his life he moved in one of the most brilliant intellectual circles the world has ever seen. It is true that the letters of this, his Paris period, are extant no longer, but it

seems more than doubtful that at a comparatively advanced age he should suddenly have developed literary capabilities dormant up to that point. It may further be alleged, that most of Chopin's letters were addressed to his parents or sisters, and conceived, therefore, in the simplest vein of familiar gossip, and without any pretension to style. But so indeed were Mendelssohn's, and yet they contain an abundance of graceful, humorous, and pathetic turns, which Mdme. de Sévigné herself might have envied. The fact is that Chopin's mind was of too subjective a cast to consider much the general aspects of his art, or indeed of any other question. He felt intensely, and for that feeling he found an immediate and adequate expression in his music. This sufficed him.

From the same point of view we must look at this music itself. Chopin, it is generally known, never attempted the higher or at least larger forms of the art; he wrote no symphony, no opera, and his two concertos are by no means amongst his masterpieces, especially as regards the orchestral accompaniments. It was in the Impromptu, the Nocturne, the Etude, the Valse, that Chopin felt most at home, and these graceful forms he filled and made alive with the intensity of his passion and his sorrow. It was here also that he became the interpreter of his country's grief, and nowhere is the tragic fate of Poland expressed more pathetically than in the

striking and yet so inexpressibly melancholy rhythms of Chopin's Polonaises and Mazurkas. To deny Chopin's genius on account of his predilection for these smaller forms of art, would be about as just as to call Heine and Burns minor poets because they did not excel in epics and tragedies. Genius cannot be measured by inch and ell. On the other hand, it is undeniable that the strongly individual mode of Chopin's utterance requires on the part of the hearer a certain congenial turn of mind to be fully appreciated. He does not, like Beethoven, or Mozart, or Wagner, appeal to all minds in all moods. Hence we find that musicians and critics by no means wanting in judgment fail to perceive Chopin's peculiar greatness. Mendelssohn looked down upon Chopin from the secure height of his formal perfection. He acknowledges remarkable talent, but the nature of his admiration is sufficiently indicated by the playful but significant nickname of "Chopinetto," repeatedly occurring in his letters. Moscheles adopts similar tactics of faint praise, and the more downright Field openly calls Chopin's "un talent de chambre de malade." Not wholly without justice. Chopin is the representative of a decaying nation, and his individual genius also is tinged with melancholy to a degree which to a robust and healthy nature might well appear in the light of a disease. But what, after all, is genius itself but an

undue preponderance of the imaginative faculties; a disorder of the brain in the eyes of the pathologist, a despicable weakness in those of the non-affected man of the world?

After this excursion on critical grounds it is necessary to return to the main biographical purpose of this essay. Chopin's journey to Berlin was not long afterwards followed by a trip to Vienna, and it was here that he made his first real appearance in public both as a composer and pianist. The success was all that could be desired. Chopin's playing was received with much enthusiasm as something entirely new and original, and in his own modest account of the event he especially dwells upon the fact that the ladies were in his favour. His touch was admired as wonderfully poetic, although somewhat too soft and aerial for large concert halls, and his compositions were at once recognised to be instinct with feeling and individuality. Cavilling detractors, especially from the "classic-scientific" camp, were of course not wanting, but upon the whole Chopin's career opened under the most auspicious circumstances. Of the ordinary struggle of rising genius he knew little or nothing; neither would his sensitive and tender nature have been at all able to support such a contest. Amongst the critics who most warmly welcomed the rising star Schumann must be named first. His article on

Chopin's Opus II., the Don Juan Fantasia, has been previously quoted in this Review. Although somewhat eccentric in tone, it reflects the highest credit on Schumann's critical discrimination—intuition one may call it; for the composer was entirely unknown, and the work of comparatively little importance according to the common rules of criticism. But Schumann saw the poet's mind and the master's hand in every bar of the music, and from what had been done he at once perceived what could be done—*ex ungue leonem.*

But the most remarkable circumstance is that in the very earliest records of his playing Chopin appears absolutely in the same light as when he had reached the acme of fame and artistic power. Wherever we meet him, at Vienna, or Warsaw, or Paris, or Edinburgh, he is always the same, the most accomplished though perhaps not the most brilliant virtuoso, the most sympathetic interpreter of his own compositions and the declared favourite of women. A similar phenomenon is repeated in these compositions. There are here few traces of change or development such as we notice in almost all other masters. Beethoven's work has been divided into three distinct periods, and the composer of "Rienzi" will hardly be recognised in that of "Tristan and Iseult" or the "Valkyrie." But Chopin's first work shows absolutely the same

peculiarities as his last; not even much technical progress is discernible, for Chopin was wise and discreet enough to go through his apprenticeship in private. But neither do we perceive the slightest indications of artistic "Sturm und Drang." Chopin, as by instinct, seized on the most adequate mode of expressing his thoughts, and that he never changed, any more than he did the thoughts themselves. In a lesser man this oneness of theme would have led to monotony; in him it caused concentration of the highest order. Excepting Heine, and it may be Sappho, Chopin is the most perfect embodiment of lyrical power, properly so called, that the history of art or poetry can show.

That in the life of an artist of this type love should be an important factor is but natural. A tender and pure affection is indeed the most interesting feature of Chopin's early youth. Its object was Constance Gladkowska, a gifted singer, in whom the artist as well as the man had found his ideal. It is in speaking of her to his most intimate friend, Titus Woyciechowski, that Chopin's letters gain eloquence, almost pathos. At the same time it is characteristic of his reticent and essentially inward nature that half a year had elapsed since this first meeting before he ever spoke either to her or of her. "Of her I dream every night," he writes, "but not a syllable have I exchanged

with her. In thinking of her sweet being I wrote the Adagio of my new Concerto (in E minor, Op. 11), and this morning the Valse which I send with this letter." This authentic information as to the sentimental source of a work of art is invaluable. What an amount of wild conjecture and silly anecdote might have been saved, for instance, in Beethoven's case, by a few short sentences of this kind! The following passage from the same letter is hardly less touching:—"Oh, how bitter it is to have no one to share one's grief and joy with! how terrible to feel one's heart weighed down and no soul near to hear his complaints! You know what I mean. Often I have told my piano all I wish to say to you." And what can be more charming than the following bit of youthful sentimentalism occurring in another letter to the same friend:—"The day before yesterday I dined with Frau Beyer, whose name is also Constance. I like to meet her, were it but for that inexpressibly dear name; I am even delighted when on one of her finger-napkins or handkerchiefs I see embroidered, Constance."

Of the external circumstances of this love-affair we know little. Constance seems to have returned the feeling of her youthful adorer, and on one occasion presented him with a ring, which Chopin treasured and idolised as he would the image of

his saint. Whether a definite engagement existed seems doubtful; certain it is that Chopin's family not unreasonably objected to a relation which could not but prove a serious impediment to a young artist's career; equally indubitable that it was the lady, and not Chopin, who terminated whatever private agreement may have existed between the lovers. In 1832 she married another, much to the grief of her devoted, and for a long time inconsolable lover. Before this substantial fact, Liszt's romantic story of a faithful though deserted maiden falls to the ground.

But I am anticipating. Towards the end of 1830, Chopin bade once more, and for the last time, farewell to his home, and again journeyed to Vienna. It was during his stay in that city that he received the news of the Polish revolution, which naturally affected him deeply. Titus Woyciechowski at once left Vienna, where he had been staying with his friend, and took service in the insurrectionist army, and only by the urgent wish of his parents was Chopin himself prevented from taking the same step, for which his weak health made him totally unfit. Although, as a rule, totally indifferent to politics, he followed the events of the war with the utmost anxiety, and one of his most melancholy and most beautiful Etudes, that in C minor, generally called the "Revolution," is said to have been

written just after he had received the news of the occupation of Warsaw by the Russians. Under these circumstances it may at first seem surprising that in his letters during this period there is little reference to the events alluded to. But Karasowski explains that patriotic effusions might have been a dangerous possession in case of one of those domiciliary visits which the Russian police frequently paid to the disaffected. Many of these letters were therefore immediately burnt by Chopin's friends; others never found their way to them. From one which escaped destruction the following characteristic passage may be quoted:—"Once more I embrace you (his friend Titus). You are going to the war; return as colonel. May everything turn out well. Why may I not at least be your drummer?"

In July 1831, Chopin left Vienna for Paris, or, more properly, for London; for it seems to have been his intention to stay at Paris for a short time only, and in his passport were written the words "passant par Paris à Londres." Liszt relates that at a much later period, when Chopin had permanently settled at the French capital, he used to say smilingly, "I am only passing through Paris." At first, however, it appeared as if these words were to find a more literal interpretation. Chopin's reception in Paris was by no means as favourable as he and his friends might have expected. Artists of

much inferior merit, but of established reputation, such as Kalkbrenner, Herz, and others, engrossed public attention. Their brilliant technical feats appealed to the masses more readily than the spiritual beauty of Chopin's touch. Moreover, the favourable notices of the German papers were of little avail with the haughty Parisians. No wonder, therefore, that Chopin's first concert was, financially at least, a complete failure. His countrymen, it is true, attended and applauded; but the French public were conspicuously absent. Easily discouraged, Chopin thought of throwing up the game. Liszt, Hiller, and other friends, tried in vain to console him. He wavered between returning home and passing on to England, eventually America. In this emergency a *deus ex machinâ* appeared on the scene in the portly shape of Baron Rothschild. In his drawing-room Chopin played a few days before his intended departure; and it was here that, under the auspices of the charming and highly cultivated lady of the house, he was introduced to the *haute volée* of Paris. The excitement of the moment acted inspiringly; he played and improvised as he had never done before. The surprise, the enchantment were universal; and his success was as lasting as it was brilliant. Henceforth his position in Paris was secured. His concerts, whenever he could make up his mind to appear in public, were

crowded; publishers eagerly asked for his compositions, and well-paid and highly appreciated lessons were a permanent and agreeable source of income to one who—a solitary instance amongst composers—delighted in teaching.

The early years of Louis Philippe's reign mark an acme in French society and literature. A more brilliant display of youthful talent and energy than the Romantic School of poetry and of painting could show has rarely been seen before or since. For the tendencies of this school Chopin felt the warmest sympathy; with many of its members he was intimately acquainted. Gautier and Victor Hugo were among his friends; Delacroix and Ary Scheffer frequented his musical evenings. There also might be met Heine, with whom Chopin had long communings on the wonderland of phantasy so intimately known to both of them. Liszt's description of one of these meetings, of which he himself was one of the most interesting features, ought to be read. They were, indeed, gatherings of the gods, from which everything vulgar and mediocre instinctively kept aloof. In his own art also Chopin found much to interest him and stimulate his creative power. Auber's "Muette de Portici" and Rossini's "Tell" were then new works. Bellini, Chopin's favourite composer, was on the summit of his fame. Meyerbeer created a fabulous sensation

with the new effects of his "Robert le Diable." Boieldieu represented the consummate grace of French comic opera. And how marvellously were these works interpreted! The names of Malibran, Rubini, Lablache, Nourrit, and Madame Schröder Devrient, then all in their prime, fill one with deep regret at such high and varied achievement irrevocably lost to art. Such virtuosi as Kalkbrenner, Thalberg, Liszt, and Hiller complete the artistic group.

Of all this brilliant and buoyant life Chopin has sent long and detailed accounts to his parents and friends at home. These letters existed a few years ago. M. Karasowski has held them in his hand and cites passages from memory. Now, alas! they are lost to the world for ever. The story of this loss is as sad as it is significant. On September 19th, 1863, during the last Polish rising, Count Berg, the Governor-General, passed in his carriage the so-called Zamoiski House at Warsaw, an enormous block of buildings let out in chambers and lodgings to the upper classes. From one of the innumerable windows of this building a shot was fired at the Count's carriage, followed by some Orsini bombs, which, however, hurt no one. Immediately the house was surrounded by the soldiers and every male inhabitant marched off to the citadel. The women were allowed to depart. After this, every piece of furniture in the house, from the large

wardrobe to a child's cradle, was thrown out of window and heaped into an enormous pile in the centre of the square. In the course of the evening fire was set to the whole and everything burnt to ashes. There is a touch of primitive barbarousness about this act of wanton devastation more appalling perhaps than even the systematic cruelty of a more civilised Government would have been. The night scene in the square is worthy of Salvator Rosa's brush. An interesting account of it may be found in Mr. Sutherland Edwards's work on the "Private History of the Polish Insurrection." Science and art had to deplore severe losses on the occasion. Thus the oldest and best illuminated manuscripts of Longinus were destroyed, these being in the possession of one of the lodgers, Prince Lubomirski, who was engaged on a critical edition of the philosopher's works. But perhaps the most valuable fuel of the Russian bonfire was the large collection of Chopin memorials, cherished and religiously preserved by his sister. Amongst these were, besides valuable presents from his pupils and admirers, his pianoforte, and his portrait by Ary Scheffer, which a Russian officer, after carefully examining it for some time, threw into the flames. The last moments of the pianoforte are thus recorded by Mr. Edwards: "Several pianos of inferior Viennese make were cast out and killed by the

fall. Chopin's piano, however, died hard. 'It fell,' says my informant, who knew the instrument and watched its last moments, 'with a loud melodious sigh, and I could not help,' he adds, 'admiring the solidity of Erard's workmanship when I saw that only its legs were broken.'"

All Chopin's letters addressed to his family from abroad perished with the rest, and a few notes written to friends are the only autobiographical material remaining of the eighteen last and most interesting years of his life. Fortunately other sources are at hand. Two journeys to Germany, where he renewed his acquaintance with Mendelssohn and made that of Schumann, one of his earliest and stanchest admirers, must be passed over. His third sojourn in that country in 1836 was of more lasting importance for his life. In that year falls Chopin's engagement with Maria Wodzynska, a beautiful Polish lady, whose acquaintance he had made some time previously. Four years had elapsed since the loss of his first love. The old wound had healed, and once more Chopin looked forward to a happy quiet family life in his own country. But again bitterest disappointment was in store for him. He, the adored of women, was doomed to misfortune in his personal relations with them. It appears that his beloved abruptly changed her mind, jilted the composer, and married a Count instead.

It was while smarting under this blow that Chopin met for the first time the woman in whom during the remainder of his life his feelings were to centre —for better and for worse. Chopin's connection with Madame Dudevant is too much a matter of notoriety to be passed over in silence. George Sand herself is by no means reticent on the subject. According to her own account, in the "Histoire de ma Vie," her feelings never passed the limit of sincere friendship. "J'avais pour l'artiste," she says, "une sorte d'adoration maternelle très-vive." She even regarded him as a kind of lightning conductor, a safeguard "contre des émotions que je ne voulais plus connaître." A similar psychological problem she expounds at greater length in the novel of "Lucrezia Floriani," considered to be by Chopin himself and the world in general a portraiture of their friendship, in spite of George Sand's indignant denial of any such parallelism. Chopin's irritability and morbid changefulness of mood she further implies at last made separation a matter of duty and necessity.

It is, of course, difficult to contradict a lady's statement on a point of such delicacy, but in justice to Chopin one is bound to say that his friends, and M. Karasowski especially, take a very different view of the case. According to the latter, the passionate affection was by no means on Chopin's side alone,

and it was not till this passion began to cool in George Sand that she began to feel the irksomeness of her task as companion and sick-nurse of a dying man. Perhaps the truth lies in this, as in most cases, between these divergent statements, or rather in a combination of the two. The mutual position of man and woman was reversed in the pair: Chopin, the child of genius, helpless, and sick to death, needed protection as well as love. Both he found in George Sand. She kept his accounts, she furnished his rooms, she wrote his letters, and tended him in his illness with the same devotion as she would her own children. Perhaps in such moments she hardly realised in her feeling the difference between the son and the lover. Chopin's devotion and gratitude, on the other hand, partook of a feeling of almost filial reverence. He felt, and never denied, that he owed the happiness of many years to her. For her care was not limited to his physical wants alone. Not to speak of the infinite resources of her own mind, he found in her house the full contentment of his social requirements. He might drop into her drawing-room of an evening, and talk or play or dream as the mood took him, and no one was allowed to disturb his solitude when he wished to be alone. The description of the days and the evenings at her villa in Nohant gives one the idea of a sociable and yet quiet and unrestrained country life in its absolute

perfection. Especially one night, when the piano was taken out into the garden, and when Chopin and Liszt alternately awoke the echo of the esplanade with their inspired chords, lingered in the memory of all those present. It was also George Sand who, after the first serious attack of his chest-disease, insisted on Chopin's accompanying her to the South, and by her faithful attendance restored his shattered health as far as possible. The visit to Majorca has been so fully and so vividly described by the great novelist herself that further reference to it is unnecessary. Readers of the "Histoire de ma Vie" will especially remember the scene, when one stormy evening, Madame Dudevant and her children being absent on a walk, Chopin had worked himself into such a state of feverish anxiety on their account, that even their return could hardly persuade him of their safety—the result of a kind of visionary trance through which he had passed being the Prelude in B minor, one of his most inspired compositions. In the same book frequent reference is made to that irritability of Chopin's temper which no doubt greatly contributed to the final rupture nearly ten years later. The causes of this bitter ending of so much affection have been differently stated. George Sand alleges as the chief reason the determined aversion Chopin evinced towards her children. On the other hand, it has been asserted that in the same

degree as her passion began to abate, she became tired of the incessant care and attendance required by the suffering artist, and that for a long time she watched for an opportunity of throwing off the irksome obligation. The publication of "Lucrezia Floriani" is said to have been one of these stratagems, and it cannot be denied that, under the circumstances, it at least showed a great want of delicacy on her part to give to the world a tale so strikingly resembling the painful reality. Her children—true *enfants terribles*—aggravated the offence by exultingly asking the composer, "Do you know, M. Chopin, that Prince Charles (the hero of the novel) is meant for you?" But it betrays ignorance of George Sand's open and impulsive nature to charge her with having vicariously inflicted this last and bitterest wound.

The ultimate result was that at the beginning of 1847 Chopin abruptly left George Sand's house, and never spoke to her again. Once more they met by accident at a friend's house. She approached him with outstretched hand, and with the word "Frédéric" on her lips; but he turned away and silently left the room.

The immediate consequence of these sad events was a violent attack of Chopin's disease, from which he recovered slowly, and only through the self-sacrificing care of his favourite pupil, Gutmann,

who never left his bedside for a moment. It was chiefly to free himself from the mental and physical depression under which he laboured that Chopin resumed his long-delayed plan of paying a visit to this country, and in this intention he was confirmed by the revolutionary events of which Paris soon became the scene. The year 1848 witnessed an exodus of Parisian artists to these shores similar to that caused by the Franco-German war. Berlioz, Kalkbrenner, Thalberg, Charles Hallé (who settled in London), and the Viardots were amongst the fugitives. Chopin landed in England on the 21st of April 1848, and from that date till the hour of his departure, I am enabled to follow his steps almost day by day. From the interesting personal recollections kindly placed at my disposal by the gentlemen already named, and other distinguished artists and amateurs, I must reluctantly limit myself to gleaning such facts as may be most useful to Chopin's future biographer.

Once before, in August 1837, Chopin had paid a short visit to London, most likely in search of medical advice. On that occasion he did not play in public, and seems to have observed a strict incognito even towards his intimate friends. "Chopin is said to have turned up here all of a sudden," Mendelssohn writes, *de dato* London, September 1837; "but he called on no one, and made no one's acquaintance.

He played one evening most beautifully at Broadwood's (the celebrated pianoforte manufacturer), and after that hurried away again. I hear he is still greatly suffering." Nothing was seen of him in London for the next eleven years, but his compositions gradually began to spread amongst the more intelligent class of amateurs, and several distinguished English musicians, such as Mr. Osborne, Mr. L. Sloper, and others, had heard him in Paris, and joyfully welcomed him on his arrival in this country. But amongst his most zealous admirers ought to be mentioned the Misses Stirling, two Scotch ladies, one of whom was Chopin's pupil. During his whole stay in this country these ladies paid the composer all the care and attention of which his rapidly declining health stood in need. Chopin was accompanied by a faithful servant, who stayed with him till the end, and joined soon after his arrival by a favourite Norwegian pupil named Telefson. Their constant attendance was required the more urgently, as Chopin's power of breathing at this time already was so feeble that he found it impossible to walk up or down stairs, and had to be carried—no difficult task, it is true, in his emaciated condition. "Yet although nearly forty years old," an eye-witness adds, "his blonde hair was as thick and as gracefully waving as it might have been with a very young man. Of singularly distinguished personal appear-

ance, his refined manners at once commended him as one of gentle culture. At the pianoforte none could be more unobtrusively quiet in his movements." Other testimony concurs as to the all but overpowering impression produced by Chopin's spiritualised beauty combined with an artistic inspiration and vitality that seemed to defy approaching death itself.

Chopin's first lodgings, some readers may care to know, were at 10 Bentinck Street, but these he left after a few days, and settled down in comfortable rooms at 48 Dover Street. Immediately on his arrival he renewed his acquaintance with the Broadwoods, who received him with the courtesy uniformly shown by that house to native and foreign artists, and placed their instruments at his disposal.[1] The

[1] A short synopsis of the instruments used by Chopin at various times and places will be interesting. Pianofortes, like pianists, have their distinctive types and characteristics, and the style of a player may be generally guessed at from the kind of instrument he is known to favour. The resonant brilliancy of an Erard or Steinway commends itself to a virtuoso of the impulsive or dramatic school, while a more spiritually refined artist will prefer the soft pliable touch and tone of a Bechstein or Pleyel. Chopin himself has pointed out the difference: "Quand je suis mal disposé," he says, "je joue sur un piano d'Erard, et j'y trouve facilement un son fait. Mais quand je me sens en verve et assez fort pour trouver mon son à moi, il me faut un piano de Pleyel." The poetic qualities of touch so much valued by Chopin in the last-named instruments he found again in Broadwood's grand pianofortes, and for that reason he exclusively adhered to them during his stay in England and Scotland. The instrument destroyed in Warsaw was, as we have

first London drawing-room at which Chopin played (May 10) seems to have been that of Lady Blessington at Gore House, the well-known rallying-point of a distinguished literary and artistic circle. For in London, as in Paris, he by no means confined himself to the society of his own profession. Unlike too many musicians, he liked to meet literary men of distinction, and one of the first social gatherings he attended was a brilliant soirée at Mrs. Grote's (May 6), at which, however, he did not play. I also hear of a dinner given in his honour by Macready; Thackeray, Berlioz, Mrs. Proctor, and Sir Julius Benedict being amongst the guests. The meeting of the greatest English and one of the greatest French humorists must have been interesting to watch. But I am told that somehow Berlioz and Thackeray did not fraternise. Chopin himself was too ill to attend.

As to the composer's execution on the piano, the critics seem to have been more or less unanimous. It appears, indeed, as if but one opinion were possible on the subject. I could quote the words of many persons, musicians, amateurs, and intelligent listeners in general, all coinciding as to the unequalled poetical

seen, an Erard. Chopin's own favourite Pleyel fortunately was saved, having been left by Miss Stirling, who acquired possession after the composer's death, to Chopin's niece, and not, like the remainder of the relics, to his sister.

charm of his playing, sometimes even as to the terms in which they convey their impression. Three correspondents, quite unknown to each other, compare his soft-gliding *arpeggios* to the sound of the Eolian harp. Lord Houghton, also, who heard Chopin in Paris before the rupture with George Sand, speaks of the strange pathos with which "his hands meandered over the piano." The following opinion of one of the best connoisseurs of Chopin's music and style deserves quotation: "His *legatissimo* touch, and his incomparable management of the pedals, enabled him to produce *sostinente* effects unheard from any other pianist. His wide *arpeggios* became sustained harmonies to serve as background to all his intense feeling conveyed through the melody. There was no affectation in his playing; it was the most simply natural that could be. It might be surmised that this was a manner conditioned by his delicate health, and the characteristic only of his later years, and that strong contrasts had not been wanting in his earlier time. Any one who saw him play and watched the peculiarities of his fingering could soon see that his touch never could have been different. The description of his playing by Mendelssohn, Liszt, and Schumann coincides with this opinion." So, indeed, does the earliest Viennese criticism on his début in that city, as the reader will recollect; a circumstance which, I repeat, is in strange parallelism

with what has been said of the unvaried stability of Chopin's style as a composer.

It will be understood that qualities such as these appealed to the select few rather than to the multitude. This was felt even by an innocent but not ill-natured critic in the *Glasgow Herald* (September 30, 1848), who, while confessing that he could make little of Chopin's style, adds that it was evidently better suited to the family circle than to a concert-room. Changing the Scotch "family circle" into the French *salon*, Chopin would have fully agreed with this verdict. He indeed appeared in public reluctantly and as seldom as possible. "I am not suited for concert-giving," he would say; "the public intimidate me; their looks, only stimulated by curiosity, paralyse me; their strange faces oppress me; their breath stifles me." Liszt discovers the half-conscious cause of this reluctance in the artist's pride. "Chopin," he writes, "was perfectly aware of his own superiority; perhaps it did not receive sufficient reverberation and echo from without to give him the tranquil assurance that he was perfectly appreciated." George Sand explains the problem with her usual mastery of psychological *nuance*. In the elaborate delineation of Chopin's character founded on her long personal experience, she says, "Il était homme du monde par excellence, non pas du monde trop officiel et trop nombreux, mais du

monde intime, des salons de vingt personnes, de l'heure où la foule s'en va, où les habitués se pressent autour de l'artiste pour lui arracher par d'aimables importunités le plus pur de son inspiration."

It is sad to think that so much individual genius and so much technical accomplishment should be all but totally lost to the development of the art. But Chopin had few professional pupils, and those amongst them who, like Filtsch, would have been most capable of continuing the tradition of his style, died young. The best living representative of his method, Madame Dubois (the granddaughter of Baron O'Meara, of Napoleonic remembrance), who was Chopin's pupil for years, and is at present one of the leading piano-teachers in Paris, has, strangely enough, been omitted in M. Karasowski's list.

But we must return to London. Towards the end of the season, dinner-parties and late hours began to tell on Chopin, and to recruit his strength a trip to Scotland was suggested by his friends. But his suffering lungs, as might have been foreseen, were wholly unable to resist the influences of the Northern climate, and his social liabilities seemed to increase rather than to grow less among his hospitable friends in the North. Some letters written to a Polish friend at this period breathe a despondency bordering on despair:—"All the morning I am quite incapable of doing anything; for no sooner have I dressed myself

than I feel so exhausted that I must rest again. After dinner I have to sit for two hours with the gentlemen, to hear what they say and to see what they drink. I am bored to death, and try to think of something else; after that I go to the drawing-room, where I want all my energy to rouse myself, for every one is anxious to hear me play. . . . When I am just a little settled, I have to journey on again, for my friends, with the best intentions in the world, will not let me rest. They call for me to introduce me to all their relations," &c. We know what that means in the North. Scotch mists and Scotch cousins, most agreeable to the healthy mind, were weighing heavily on the tender-nerved composer.

Chopin gave one concert at Glasgow. A copy of the advertisement is now lying before me: "Monsieur Chopin has the honour to announce that his matinée musicale will take place on Wednesday, 27th of September," &c. Thinking of the mental and physical suffering this "honour" inflicted on the dying man, the formal terms gain a sad significance in one's mind. Moreover, in spite of a brilliant list of patronising ladies, headed by the Duchess of Argyll, and in spite of the zealous endeavours of Mr. Muir Wood, the eminent publisher and Chopin's friend, who superintended the business arrangements, the net profits did not exceed the paltry sum of £60.

On or about the 3d of November he returned to London and took lodgings at 4 St. James's Place. His object was to play at the Guildhall on the occasion of a ball (not a concert) given for the benefit of the Polish refugees, on November 16th. His patriotism would not allow him to refuse his aid for such a purpose. The reward he reaped may be judged of by the following remarks, for which I am indebted to one present on the occasion: "The people hot from dancing, who went into the room where he played, were but little in the humour to pay attention, and anxious to return to their amusement. He was in the last stage of exhaustion, and the affair resulted in disappointment. His playing at such a place was a well-intentioned mistake."

A week after this inauspicious day Chopin left London. His last letter dated from there, and addressed to a friend in Paris, is full of deepest sorrow. "On Thursday I shall leave London, terrible to me. In addition to everything else, I have got neuralgia. Tell Pleyel to send me a piano by Thursday; buy a bunch of violets, to have some scent in my drawing-room. I should like to find a little poetry in my sitting-rooms and in my bedroom, where most likely I shall have to lie for a long time. Friday evening I hope to be in Paris; another day here would kill me or drive me mad. . . . Let there be a fire in all the rooms, and see

that they are dusted. Perhaps," he concludes, with a sudden gleam of hope, characteristic of the consumptive patient, "I may yet recover."

Alas! he was beyond recovery. The last months of his life were a continual struggle with the cruel disease gradually but surely encroaching on him. It would be too painful to dwell on these moments. But the last scene of the tragedy is beautiful and pathetic—a worthy conclusion, indeed, of such a life. I leave the word to Liszt:—

"The drawing-room adjoining Chopin's chamber was constantly occupied by some of his friends, who, one by one, in turn approached him to receive a sign of recognition, a look of affection, when he was no longer able to address them in words. On Sunday, the 15th of October, his attacks were more violent and more frequent, lasting for several hours in succession. The Countess Delphine Potocka, who was present, was much distressed; her tears were flowing fast when he observed her standing at the foot of his bed, tall, slight, draped in white, resembling the beautiful angels created by the imagination of the most devout amongst painters. Without doubt he believed her to be a heavenly apparition. When the crisis left him for a moment he asked her to sing; they thought him at first seized with delirium; but he eagerly repeated his request. Who could have ventured to oppose his

wish? The piano was rolled from the drawing-room to the door of his chamber, when, with sobs in her voice and tears streaming down her cheeks, his gifted countrywoman sang. This beautiful voice had never before attained an expression so full of deepest pathos. He seemed to suffer less as he listened. She sang the famous canticle to the Virgin which is said once to have saved Stradella's life. 'How beautiful!' he exclaimed. 'My God, how very beautiful! Again—again!' Though overwhelmed with emotion, the Countess had the noble courage to comply with the last wish of a friend, a countryman. Again she sat down at the piano and sang a hymn by Marcello. Chopin again feeling worse, everybody was seized with fright; by a spontaneous impulse all threw themselves on their knees; no one ventured to speak; the sacred silence was broken alone by the voice of the Countess floating like a melody from heaven above the sighs and sobs which formed its heavy and mournful earth-accompaniment. It was the hour of twilight; a dying light lent its mysterious shadows to this sad scene. Chopin's sister, prostrated near his bed, wept and prayed, and never quitted this attitude of supplication while the life of her beloved brother lasted."

Chopin lingered for two days after this scene. Most of the time he was unconscious; but in a lucid interval he received the last sacraments of the Catho-

lic Church from a Polish abbé. He died October 17, 1849, in the arms of his favourite pupil, Gutmann. His last conscious movement was to kiss the hand of his friend in gratitude. His body was literally covered with flowers, especially with his favourite violets. When Chopin, nineteen years before, left his country, he took from his native village, Wola, a handful of Polish earth. This was strewn on his coffin when it was lowered into the grave. It had been his wish, expressed shortly before his end. He was buried at Père Lachaise, next to Bellini, whom he had much loved in life. Cherubini's grave is on the other side. The bas-relief portrait on his tombstone is by Clesinger, the son-in-law of George Sand.

FOREIGN SCHOOLS OF MUSIC.

(From the *Times*, January 6, 1879.)

THE general interest in the question of musical education, both elementary and artistic, which has found an echo in the voluminous correspondence published in the *Times*, makes a more comprehensive treatment of the subject seem desirable. That improvement of some kind is needed if England is to occupy a leading position among musical nations is admitted on all sides; but as to the means by which this improvement is to be brought about opinions differ widely. One need not share Sir George Bowyer's pessimist view of his countrymen's musical capabilities to perceive that the large sum we annually spend to teach school-children to sing "by ear" is to a great extent thrown away. Mr. Hullah would be willing to admit this. On the other hand, scarcely any expense would be too large if the result were to diffuse among the masses a fair amount of knowledge of the most refining of the arts. But the reform of elementary teaching alone is not sufficient to make us a musical nation—we

mean actively musical in the highest sense, for that we are receptively so it would be absurd to deny. Our future Beethoven cannot acquire his counterpoint at a Board School, nor our future Mario his training by singing in the chorus at the Norwich Festival. To have a national school of composers, we want, first of all, a great national centre of musical tuition—a school which would attract the large amount of talent at present in danger of running to waste, and which in return would send out professors and standard artists to diffuse knowledge and taste by teaching and example. That such a great national centre does not at present exist in England we may state without any disparagement to the Royal Academy of Music and other institutions. How, indeed, could it exist, as long as Government refused to render substantial assistance? A principal of European reputation, whose name would attract pupils from all parts of the world, cannot be engaged, and first-class artists, English and foreign, cannot be induced to give their undivided energies to an institution on the proceeds of students' fees or of private liberality. For such a purpose a Government grant is required very different from the paltry sum grudgingly voted to the Royal Academy. Of the various schemes recently proposed in the direction alluded to we purposely refrain from speaking. We are glad to learn from

Mr. Henry Leslie's letter of the liberal offers made, and the still more splendid hopes held out in high quarters. But the plan is as yet too embryonic for public discussion. To prepare such a discussion, it will be well to look out in foreign countries for the precedents which cannot unfortunately be found at home. Such a survey may tend to throw light on the advantages to be arrived at and the dangers to be avoided.

The fact that the awakening of a nation's musical taste coincides with, and is further developed by, the establishment of schools of music, is proved by the history of the art beyond a doubt. About the year 1537 Palestrina, the founder of the Italian School, and the father of modern music, was studying in Rome under Goudimel, and in the same year the first Conservatorio properly so called—that of Santa Maria di Loreto—was established at Naples. There is no immediate connection between the two facts. But they tend to prove that Italy at the time was ripe for its mission of becoming the musical centre of the world. The great musicians of the Netherlands, which previously occupied that position, had for some time begun to flock to Italy, and the earliest music schools both at Naples and Venice were indeed founded by Flemings. These two cities subsequently became the seats of the Conservatorios the history of which concerns us here. Each of the two cities

contained four of these institutes, those at Naples being called respectively Santa Maria di Loreto, I Poveri di Gesù Cristo, La Pietà dei Turchini, and San Onofrio; those at Venice the Ospedali della Pietà, dei Mendicanti, and Degl'Incurabili, and the Ospedaletto di SS. Giovanni e Paolo.

The names of these schools sufficiently indicate their character as charitable institutions and the connection of some of them with hospitals. This character, indeed, they retained till the end of the last century. The Pietà at Venice, for instance, sheltered at that time as many as 1000 girls, mostly orphans, of whom only seventy were musicians, each of the other three hospitals or orphanages having about forty musical pupils. It should be added that at Venice the musical education thus charitably given was limited to the female sex, while at Naples it was as exclusively confined to boys. The former city accordingly became famous for its singers, operatic and otherwise, while the speciality of Naples was composition. To receive a distinct idea of the working of these institutions, we must turn to the pages of that most intelligent and painstaking of musical travellers, Dr. Burney. On his "Tour through France and Italy" he came in due course to Venice, and the evening after his arrival, Saturday, August 4, 1770, he is at one of the Conservatorios ready to "take notes" of all that may be noteworthy.

In his opinion, the Incurabili is, "in point of music, singing, and orchestra, superior to the rest," a circumstance which he unhesitatingly ascribes to the influence of its director, or *maestro di cappella*, the celebrated Baldassare Galuppi (born 1706), at that time just returned from his Russian triumphs and at the acme of his fame. Sacchini (born 1734), also a composer of high repute and a pupil of the great Durante, presided over the Ospedaletto, to which accordingly Burney assigns the second place. The circumstance is remarkable as showing, even at this early period, the enormous importance of the services of a great—and acknowledgedly great—musician for the progress of similar institutions. But for Cherubini the Conservatoire of Paris would not have been what it is, and but for Mendelssohn that of Leipsic would probably not have been at all. For further details and statistics regarding the Venetian music schools the reader is referred to Burney's "Tour." Only a curious and picturesque account of a performance witnessed by him may be quoted here. He writes:—

"This evening, in order to make myself more fully acquainted with the nature of the Conservatorios and to finish my musical inquiries here, I obtained permission to be admitted into the music school of the Mendicanti, and was favoured with a concert, which was performed wholly on my account, and lasted two hours, by the best vocal and instrumental performers of this hospital. It was really curious to see as well

as to hear every part of this excellent concert performed by female violins, hautboys, tenors, basses, harpsichord, French horns, and even double basses. There was a prioress, a person in years, who presided ; the first violin was very well played by Antonia Cubli, of Greek extraction ; the harpsichord sometimes by Francesca Rossi, *maestra del coro*, and sometimes by others. These young persons frequently change instruments. The singing was really excellent, in different styles ; Laura Risegari and Giacoma Frari had very powerful voices, capable of filling a large theatre. These sung *bravura* songs and capital scenes selected from Italian operas ; and Francesca Tomji, sister to the *abbate* of that name, and Antonia Lucuvich (the second a Slavonian girl), whose voices were more delicate, confined themselves chiefly to pathetic songs of taste and expression."

These extracts tend to show the scope and excellence of teaching attained at these Conservatorios. They also prove that the schools were open to gifted foreigners as well as the natives of Italy or of the territory of the Republic.

The Conservatorios of Naples, originally also four in number, were at the time of Burney's visit in a state of decay, a circumstance which did not escape his critical eye. One, the Poveri di Gesù Cristo, had ceased to exist, and the vitality of the others was sadly impaired. But the skeleton of a great system still remained, and, as the essential features of that system appear copied, more or less accurately, in all modern institutions of the same kind both in Italy and elsewhere, it will be well to add a few data. The number of pupils was at St. Onofrio, 90 ; at La Pietà, 120 ; at

Santa Maria di Loreto, 200. Boys were admitted between the ages of eight and twenty, the younger ones being bound to stay for eight years; those of maturer age had to undergo a severe examination before admittance; but in all cases the rule was, that if after a certain time no genius was discovered, the pupil was dismissed to make room for another. The institution of pupil-teachers also was known, and frequent performances before the most distinguished amateurs were, here as in Venice, among the most valuable features of practical tuition. There were two *maestri di cappella*, or headmasters, the first attending chiefly to composition, the second to singing. Assistant masters for the stringed and wind instruments and other branches of musical art were also attached.

With the history of these institutions some of the greatest names of Italian music in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are connected. It was at Naples that Alessandro Scarlatti taught Durante, who in his turn counted among his pupils Jomelli, Piccini, Sacchini, and Paisiello. Domenico Scarlatti, Alessandro's son, and the greatest pianist of his age, received his early education under his father, and at Naples Porpora founded the school of singing from which Farinelli and Caffarelli carried the fame of Italian vocalisation all over Europe. The decay of Italian music towards the end of the last century coincided with that of the Conservatorios. The

Revolution swept away their ruins along with those of other institutions. In 1799 the three remaining music schools of Naples were thrown into one, which subsequently received the name of Real Collegio di Musica. This, again, took a leading position among musical centres in Italy, and some of the most celebrated modern operatic writers—for instance, Bellini —were its pupils. Mercadante was the director from 1840 till his death in 1870, when he was succeeded by Signor Rossi. In 1866, when the Committee of the Society of Arts published its valuable "Report on the State of Musical Education at Home and Abroad," there were in Italy three Conservatorios supported by Government, at Florence, Milan, and Naples respectively, all of modern origin. But of the influence of the new kingdom of Italy on the progress of musical education in that country it would be premature to judge. A committee of leading musicians, under the presidency of Verdi, was assembled by the Minister of Education at Florence in 1871, the result being an elaborate report proposing some sweeping reforms.

To the musical world in general, however, the state of the art in Italy is no longer a matter of all-engrossing interest. The "land of song" is not by any means the only source from which the modern stage, and much less the modern concert-room, derive their singers, and for a model institute of education also

we must look elsewhere. That the idea of such is in most essential points realised by the celebrated Conservatoire of Paris no competent judge will deny. The administrative skill of the French and their tendency towards centralisation would naturally make Paris a favourable soil for a national school of music, in the truest significance of the word. Still no official machinery can create genius or that general interest in art of which genius seems to be the individual expression. That such an interest existed in France towards the end of the last century is sufficiently proved by the celebrated contest between Gluckistes and Piccinistes, a contest at which grave historians are apt to smile, but which few modern writers would be prepared to call altogether frivolous. The French school of composers, in the person it is true of a German, remained victorious, and the establishment and cultivation of national taste became possible. For such a task it is exactly that a great central music school is wanted.

Any one desirous of gaining a thorough insight into the origin and varying fortunes of the great French institution ought to study M. Lassabathie's painstaking "Histoire du Conservatoire Impérial de Musique et de Déclamation" (Paris, 1860). It is, as the author modestly remarks in his preface, "une compilation sèche et bien aride," consisting mainly of rows of figures and lists of names. But there is

also a large collection of official documents interesting to the student of political as well as of artistic events. All the successive Governments of France from 1784 to 1859 are here represented, the documents reproduced including, for instance, a decree issued by the Conseil Général de la Commune de Paris, signed Pétion "l'an quatrième de la liberté," also the celebrated "Décret Impérial," dated Moscow, October 15, 1812, and another issued during the "Hundred Days," a few weeks after the Emperor's landing in France. The honour of founding the Conservatoire proper, however, belongs undoubtedly to the Republic. There was, it is true, an "Ecole Royale de Chant," created by the decree of 1784 above referred to, which, together with the Ecole de Musique Gratuite de Musique de la Garde Nationale, founded in 1792, was merged in the "Conservatoire de Musique," but the institution in its modern sense, and the name, were not created till 1795. The number of teachers was determined at 115 (at present reduced to 77), that of pupils of both sexes at 600. The subvention allowed by the State was 240,000f., very nearly the sum expended at present. The Budget of 1878 fixed the subvention at 238,200f., that for 1879 at 246,100f. The sum, however, has at various periods undergone considerable modifications, and we generally find that Imperial and Republican

Governments restore what the Bourbons had withdrawn. Seeing the splendid results obtained, the expenditure is incommensurably small, and it may at first seem surprising why virtuosi and composers of European reputation should devote six hours in the week to their professional duties at a salary exceeding in few instances £100. (We are informed that by a decree issued within the last month the salaries of professors of composition have been raised to 3000f.) But in France the Conservatoire confers a lustre on all attached to it, which, even from a mere practical point of view, is more valuable than a large salary. The Conservatoire, indeed, has succeeded in becoming the cynosure and centre of national, and to a considerable degree of foreign, talent. There are few, if any, composers celebrated in the musical literature of modern France who do not owe their instruction to the great national institute to which most of them afterwards belonged in the capacity of teachers. Cherubini and Auber were directors of the Conservatoire, a post at present occupied by M. Ambroise Thomas. Méhul, Lesueur, Gossec, Paer, Habeneck, Boieldieu, Halévy, Romberg, and many others held leading positions as teachers. Berlioz and Félicien David were librarians; Gounod gained the Prix de Rome in 1839. M. Massenet has just been appointed Professor of Composition. The list of names might be multiplied twofold and threefold.

But those already cited will show that musical education in France means the Conservatoire. Nor is its influence limited to Paris or France. Branch institutes, so-called *succursales*, have been established at Dijon, Lille, Marseilles, Lyons, Nantes, Rouen, and Toulouse, and the celebrated Conservatoire of Brussels, with its own *succursales* at Liége and Antwerp, is essentially founded on the French model. A large and valuable library, and a collection of musical instruments and other objects of art, of which latter M. Chouquet, the present keeper, has published a complete catalogue, are attached to the great French school. The concerts given in the theatre of the Conservatoire (erected in 1806), where the competitions of the pupils also take place, are renowned all the world over. And all this at a public expenditure of £10,000 per annum.

Into the plan of instruction and administration on which the Conservatoire is conducted we cannot enter in detail. The Report of the Society of Arts already referred to gives some valuable information on the subject. What we propose to do is to lay down a few of the broad principles which have made the Conservatoire what it is, and without which the success of a national school of music would be impossible. First of all, the post of director is assigned to a leading musician, who superintends the whole working of the school without being too much

hampered by the requirements of business routine. From him the spirit of education naturally takes its tone, although much is left to the discretion of the professors. The interest of the latter in their work at the school is secured by sufficient, although by no means lavish, salaries. The instruction being entirely gratuitous, the stay of pupils at the school sufficient to guarantee their thorough training becomes not a duty but a privilege. The same circumstance excludes all temptation on the part of the professors to encumber themselves with hopeless pupils. Class teaching and separate lessons are provided, according to the various branches of study and to the students' proficiency, but a substantial basis of general musical knowledge is in all cases insisted upon, whatever the speciality of the individual pupil may be. In short, at the Conservatoire the young men and women live in a musical atmosphere. And this, after all, is the most essential point of all. For a Conservatorium in the true sense of the word is a school where the noblest traditions of the art in theory and practice are *conserved*, not a place where rooms are provided for music-masters to give and for amateur pupils to receive miscellaneous lessons.

Of the music schools of Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, and other countries we are compelled to speak with great brevity. We have before us a

pile of "*statuten*" and prospectuses from which a number of interesting modifications and local experiences might be gleaned. But the general rules more or less followed everywhere having been once laid down, we must not tire the patience of the reader by a mass of details. Moreover, in Germany the importance of the Conservatoires, excellent as many of them are, has never equalled that of the Paris institution. In old times, music in Germany was frequently a family tradition transmitted from father to son. We know of seven generations of more or less musical Bachs. Mozart was the son of a musician, and so was Beethoven. Neither of them owed his education to a school. But even in our own days the Conservatoires have in many instances failed to attract the leading talent of the country. Brahms never was a pupil of these institutes, nor does he belong to any of them as teacher, and the same is true of other great living composers and virtuosi, such as Wagner, Liszt, Bülow, and Robert Franz, although the latter holds a chair in the University of Halle. Joachim's appointment as director of the Berlin Academy of Music is of very recent date; and quite lately a new musical academy, named after its founder, "Dr. Hoch's Conservatorium of Music," has been opened at Frankfort-on-the-Main, Herr Raff officiating as director, and Madame Schumann and Herr Stockhausen as professors.

There are, of course, great advantages in this thorough decentralisation of musical knowledge and genius, which, moreover, is in accord with the general tendency of the nation. But the drawbacks are no less obvious. One of these is the want of permanent tradition, and of style generally, as regards the reproduction of the great classical masterpieces. This want Wagner has pointed out forcibly in his valuable report to the King of Bavaria with regard to the project of a new school of music at Munich. "If in Mozart's time," he writes, "there had been an authoritative institute such as the Conservatoire of Paris, and if Mozart had there produced his works, there would probably still exist among us a distinct tradition such as we find it in Paris with regard to the rendering of Gluck's music, in spite of much deterioration recognisable there also." For the same reason, a national German style of execution cannot be spoken of in the sense that we identify Italian and French methods of rendering. In Germany everything depends upon the individual merits of conductor or executants. Hence the unshackled development of genius in its separate sphere, but hence also the want of uniformly good performances. The German school which before others may lay claim to a large and permanent influence on national taste and

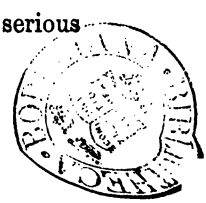
culture is, perhaps, the Leipsic Conservatoire. In spite of its essentially self-supporting character, this school has held its place among the first educational institutes of the Fatherland. Mendelssohn, its first artistic leader, has left the impress of his genius on it, and regarding his works, at least, the Leipsic Conservatoire may claim the advantage of pure and authentic tradition. The pupils of this institute, moreover, have the privilege of attending the rehearsals of first-rate orchestral performances (the celebrated Gewandhaus concerts)—a privilege not sufficiently to be estimated, and enjoyed also by the members of the young but promising music school at the Crystal Palace, where important works to be performed at the Saturday Concerts are, moreover, previously analysed by the professors of composition. The list of pupils at the Leipsic Conservatoire during the present term comprises 308 names, and among them 33 from England, 60 from America, and two from our Australian Colonies. These figures give rise to serious reflections. We are the last to advocate the stay-at-home principle in musical matters. Our future national Conservatorium must undoubtedly have an equivalent of the "Prix de Rome" to enable pupils of more than ordinary talent to widen their views and enlarge their experience by pilgrimages to the musical

centres, or, better still, to great individual composers of various schools and countries. But a thorough general training in all the practical and theoretical branches of music—all, indeed, that Leipsic can offer them—English and English-speaking musicians ought to be able to find in London.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER.

(From the *Fortnightly Review*, December 1876.)

GERMANY is the country of philosophy and of music. But the philosophy of music has been strangely neglected by its deepest thinkers. Even Leibnitz saw in music nothing but an "exercitium arithmeticæ occultum nescientis se numerare animi;" and the views of subsequent philosophers, although more speciously worded, do not approach the essence of the art more closely. Arthur Schopenhauer, the greatest philosopher Germany has produced since Kant, was the first to pierce the clouds obscuring this most ethereal of arts, and for this reason alone he deserves the attention of all intelligent musicians. But his connection with the development of modern music is of a still more intimate kind. It is known that Wagner adopted the results of Schopenhauer's philosophy, and he has indeed been called "the musical expounder of pessimism." This, of course, is absurd. Music or any other art cannot be made the medium of any philosophical or religious doctrine whatsoever — not, at least, without serious



detriment to its purity and power. At the same time, it is not without significance that the greatest modern musician is, as it were, steeped in the doctrines of this remarkable modern thinker.

The association of the two men becomes still more interesting when their respective individualities are considered. The admiration expressed by the composer for the philosopher was altogether one-sided. Schopenhauer entirely failed to discover the beauty of Wagner's music — a want of perception which, in other cases, the composer has not shown himself willing to forgive. Even Schopenhauer's æsthetic view of music appears at first sight the very antipodes of Wagner's theory and practice. But this apparent antagonism the poet-composer has attempted to disprove with a boldness of speculative reasoning all but unparalleled,—as will be seen presently. But at first it is necessary to enter into Schopenhauer's system as a whole, and that system again is inseparably connected with the philosopher's personal career and the age in which he lives.

The reaction of morbid disappointment which followed the French Revolution has left its traces in history and literature—traces too deep and too universally diffused to be accounted for by the idiosyncrasies of individuals. The note of religious scepticism, of negation absolute and relentless, had been

struck by the mighty hand of Goethe. Byron chimed in with the shrill laugh of self-consuming irony, Leopardi with the harmonious tones of his beautiful sadness. Alfred de Musset, Lenau, Heine, Poushkin, Petöfi, followed at intervals, and in countries widely remote from each other, but all were pervaded by the same sense of grief and scattered illusion. What appeared to them as their individual grief, caused by individual misfortune, was in reality the "grief of the world,"—*Weltschmerz,* as one amongst their number has significantly called it.

Schopenhauer is the philosophical exponent of the psychic conditions thus indicated. In the polished surface of his prose the darkness of despair becomes more intense, more tangible. With a power of language sometimes more poetic than poetry itself he combines trenchant sharpness of logical reasoning. With these formidable weapons he attacks the stronghold of our most cherished illusions, and scatters to the winds not only our hopes and beliefs, but the very desire of personal happiness. It is this feature of his system which, chiming in with the general mood of his age, has given Schopenhauer a popularity far beyond that usually awarded to abstract philosophers. Yet it seems to me that the idea of morbid pessimism which Schopenhauer's friends and enemies love to associate with his name is not organically connected with the great results

of his speculative research. The fuller explanation of this seeming paradox, against which I have no doubt the cry of heresy, philistinism, and other complimentary epithets will be raised by the fanatics of the school, I must leave to a later occasion. Suffice it to say here, that I am not alluding to the mere protest against that silly optimism which believes the laws and wonders of the cosmos to have been arranged by a loving Providence for the especial benefit of the human race. In this latter sense Schopenhauer shares the appellation of pessimist with Voltaire and every great thinker of old and modern times.

I have called Schopenhauer the philosophical exponent of the period of disappointed exhaustion subsequent to the exciting events of the revolutionary epoch. It must, however, not be thought that he himself took a particularly lively interest in the political side of the question, or was moved to patriotic indignation by the subjection of his country to Napoleon's iron will. Schopenhauer was all his life a stranger to national predilections, and amidst the noise of the invading French army preserved sufficient equanimity to work out one of his most abstruse metaphysical problems. There is, however, a strongly personal element in his philosophy, as there is indeed in all philosophy of a truly creative order. Schopenhauer is a *subjective* philosopher,

κατ' ἐξοχήν; the connection between his life and his work is intimate and inseparable. A brief sketch of the former will therefore be necessary before the exposition of his philosophic labour can be entered upon.

Arthur Schopenhauer was born February 22, 1788, at Danzig, at that time a free city of the German Empire. His father was a wealthy merchant, and one of the most important citizens of the small Republic, to whose institutions he was passionately attached. When, in 1793, Danzig was annexed to Prussia, he emigrated to Hamburg, regardless of heavy pecuniary losses incurred by the change of domicile. The elder Schopenhauer was altogether a remarkable man, free from the narrow prejudices of his country and time, and far above the ordinary level of culture common amongst his class. He paid prolonged visits both to France and England, and for the free government of the latter country he entertained the highest regard. It was indeed his intention to give to his hoped-for son and heir the privilege of English citizenship, for which purpose he took his wife to London during her pregnancy. Her weak health, however, obliged him to return home, and to this circumstance alone it is due that England cannot add to the names of Bacon, Locke, and Berkeley that of the greatest metaphysical thinker of the present century. The younger

Schopenhauer inherited from his father a strong predilection for the language and institutions of this country. He was perfectly familiar with the great works in its literature, and quotes the English philosophic writers, both of the past and present, with a frequency and knowledge not commonly found among German scholars. Even the more familiar idiom of the English language he mastered to an astonishing degree, owing perhaps not a little to his daily habit of reading the *Times* newspaper, which had been strongly recommended to him by his father; "because from that paper," the elder Schopenhauer used to say, "one can learn everything worth knowing." At one time Schopenhauer seriously thought of undertaking, or at least supervising, the translation into English of Kant's works; and I have seen a long and elaborate letter on Goethe's theory of colour, written by him to Sir C. Eastlake, in perfectly grammatical and all but idiomatic English.

To return to the elder Schopenhauer, he combined with his excellent gifts as a merchant and man of the world some less desirable peculiarities, which unfortunately were to some extent also transmitted to his son. Amongst these may be mentioned particularly a certain morbidness of temperament, frequently intensified to a paroxysm of dread at some impending calamity. His sudden death in 1804, by a fall

from the upper storey of his warehouse in Hamburg, was indeed ascribed by rumour to a fit of despair caused by some imaginary loss of property. According to our philosopher's pet theory, will and its appendages, such as temper, passions, and instincts of volition, are inherited from the paternal parent, while the mother contributes the softening and guiding light of the intellect. In his own case this rule holds good with regard to his father, to a less extent with regard to his mother. Johanna Schopenhauer is well known as the author of travels, novels, and other miscellaneous literature. Married to a man by many years her senior, and for whom, according to her own confession, she could feel no absorbing passion, her sentimental nature remained undeveloped. Hence, perhaps, her perpetual restlessness, to be satisfied only by frequent change of scenery and friends. Lord Nelson, Lady Hamilton, and many other political and literary celebrities count among her more or less casual acquaintances. Her more permanent connection at a later period with Goethe and the Weimar circle is well known to the student of literature. According to all accounts she seems to have been an amiable nature, open to new impulses and affections, but wanting in depth. This impression is confirmed by her works, which are amusing and full of observation, but without literary merit in a higher sense. Her

relations to her son will have to be mentioned in the further course of these remarks.

Being the only son of a rich merchant, Schopenhauer's early education was naturally arranged with a view to his adopting his father's profession. The international principle was at the same time strictly adhered to, the very name of Arthur being chosen because its spelling is identical in the English, French, and German languages. At the age of nine he was sent to one of his father's mercantile friends at Havre, with whose son he contracted a tender friendship. When, after two years, he returned to Germany, he had become, in accordance with his father's intention, a perfect Frenchman, and spoke his own language with difficulty.

About this time the first decided signs of aversion to his mercantile pursuits began to show themselves, much to the mortification of the elder Schopenhauer. The boy expressed an ardent desire for some scientific calling, too ardent and too persistent to be withstood by force. Milder forms of resistance were applied. The choice was left to the youth between entering at once a *gymnasium* (preparatory school for the university), and accompanying his parents on a tour through Europe; the meeting again of his friend in Havre being held out as an additional attraction in the latter project. Affection and curiosity at last prevailed over scientific aspiration. In 1803 the

Schopenhauers started for England, where their stay was prolonged over six months, during which time the parents made a tour to Scotland, while Arthur was left at the boarding-school of a clergyman in Wimbledon, near London. It was here that Schopenhauer acquired his perfect knowledge of the English language, and it was here also that he first imbibed the almost fanatical hatred of English bigotry frequently vented in his writings. In a letter to his parents written at this time he exclaims with boyish emphasis, "Oh, that the torch of truth might *burn* through these darknesses!" In her reply the mother gently sympathises with him on account of the large dose of Christianity he is made to swallow. A good deal of Schopenhauer's bitterness against Anglicanism and other modern developments of the Christian faith ought in fairness to be charged to the Wimbledon parson.

On their way back the family passed through Switzerland, where the grandeur of the Alps left a lasting impression on the young philosopher, delightful traces of which are discernible in his writings.

About a year after his return to Hamburg, the prospects of Schopenhauer's career were essentially changed by the sudden death of his father. For a short time he continued, from a feeling of piety, the career chosen for him by his deceased parent; but soon the longing for higher aims became irresistible,

and, at a comparatively advanced age, he entered upon a thorough course of classical training. He used to tell in later years, with justifiable pride, that he began his study of Latin at the age of nineteen, and acquired the language in six months. It ought to be added that as a Greek and Latin scholar he had few superiors in Germany, besides which he spoke French, English, and Italian with perfect ease, and translated a book from the Spanish.

In 1807 Schopenhauer joined his mother at Weimar, to complete his preparatory studies for the university under the celebrated Passow. Johanna Schopenhauer and her daughter Adèle had by this time become general favourites with the Weimar celebrities. Not long after the death of her husband, the widow had removed to the intellectual centre of Germany. She arrived just before the battle of Jena and the occupation of Weimar by the French troops, and the anxious days passed with her new acquaintances greatly furthered their intimacy. In his mother's drawing-room Schopenhauer met such men as Goethe, Wieland, Grimm, Prince Pückler, and the two Schlegels, all attracted by the lively conversation and elegant hospitality of the charming widow. Arthur, however, did not reside with his mother. For at this period already the insuperable antagonism of their natures had become apparent.

Much has been said and written about the unfor-

tunate quarrel between mother and son, and particularly the conduct of the latter has been severely commented upon. There were undoubtedly faults on both sides, but the ultimate cause of their dissension lay too deep to be measured by the ordinary scale of moral responsibilities. The differences of character were radical; no amount of mutual bearing and forbearing could have prevented the continual grating and clashing of these antagonistic natures. Johanna Schopenhauer's character has already been sketched in outline. We can imagine her at Weimar, basking in the sun of a small court, hero-worshipping in a mild way, retailing sentiment and small-talk, writing love-stories for the almanacs, wholly occupied and contented with the enjoyment of the hour. On the other hand we see the youth, full of thought, pondering over problems of deepest import, imbued with the sadness that accompanies genius, solitary in the crowd, and too proud to hide his contempt of its petty cares and interests. How could harmony spring from such a union? Let us see how the mother herself states her case, not unfairly from her own point of view.

"It is necessary for my happiness," she writes to Arthur, "to know that you are happy, but not to witness it. I have always told you how difficult it is to live with you, and the more I consider you, the more this difficulty seems to increase, at least as far as I am concerned. Indeed, I confess, as long as you are what you are, I would sooner make any sacrifice

than bring my mind to it. I do not deny your good qualities, and what repels me does not lie in your heart, not in your internal, but in your external being, that is, your opinions, your utterances, your habits; in short, our views of life totally disagree. Moreover, your moroseness, your complaints about inevitable things, your dark faces, your bizarre assertions resembling oracular utterances, against which one is not allowed to say anything—all this oppresses and disturbs my good-humour without being of any use to yourself. Your unpleasant manner of discussion, your lamentations over this stupid world and the misery of mankind, give me bad nights and evil dreams."

Spoken like a woman of the world, but decidedly wanting in that motherly love which endures and forgives, or indeed in that womanly intuition which discerns the signs of maturing genius in the morbid symptoms of boyish arrogance or despondency. The entire absence of appreciation of her son's great intellectual power on the part of Johanna Schopenhauer is painfully discernible in her whole conduct, and could not but irritate the proud spirit of the youth. When, at a later period, he presented to his mother the first-fruit of his philosophic labour, she thanked him with a bad joke, which elicited an angry retort on his part. Other circumstances of a graver nature added fuel to the flame of discord. Schopenhauer accused his mother of neglecting the memory of his father, and his indignation came to a climax when by her mismanagement he found himself in danger of being deprived of his moderate competency.

Schopenhauer at no time of his life was a miser in the ordinary sense; his extreme liberality on all occasions where charity was needed by relations or strangers sufficiently proves the contrary. But he justly regarded moderate wealth as the safeguard of his scientific independence. To make his philosophy lucrative, or, what is the same, agreeable to the powers that be, he felt himself equally unable and unwilling. The loss of his property was therefore one of those calamities which he dreaded with that all but insane terror inherited from his father and vainly combated by reason. In this case, moreover, his apprehensions proved but too well founded. On the breaking of a bank at Danzig, to which his mother had intrusted her money without security, she lost almost the whole of her own and her daughter's property. Schopenhauer himself escaped serious loss only by previous caution and a great effort of energy when his suspicion became realised.

I have mentioned these circumstances at some length, because from them I derive a grave defect in Schopenhauer's thought and feeling—the want of love. His nature was undoubtedly sad and little tending towards a charitable view of men's faults. But we all know how such harshnesses may be toned down and the sting taken out of them by the tender sympathy of a refined woman, much more of a loving and beloved mother. With such influences

brought to bear upon him in early youth, Schopenhauer would perhaps never have become an amiable member of society, with a talent for taking things pleasantly; but I doubt whether his cynicism of despair and his misanthropy, or cataphronanthropy, as he preferred to call it, would ever have been developed to the degree now so painfully observable in his works.

Another by no means pleasant feature of Schopenhauer's writings—traceable, I think, to the same unfortunate circumstances—is the low opinion he holds, or pretends to hold, of woman. Personally the philosopher was by no means insensible to the charms of love. We hear of a tender attachment which retained him in Venice for many months; and of Madame Jagemann, the beautiful actress in Weimar, he exclaimed enthusiastically, "I should have liked to marry this woman if I had found her breaking stones on the highroad." Nevertheless, he takes a pride in vilifying the sex collectively wherever an occasion offers. The chapter, "Ueber die Weiber," in the second volume of "Parerga und Paralipomena," contains the most caustic remarks on female weaknesses that ever fell from a misogynist's pen. Byron, Chamfort, and Huarte, Eastern and Western sages, are ransacked, and supplemented by the author's own observations, in a manner exceedingly amusing but for its occasional coarseness, and for the

feeling, which never leaves the reader, that all this savage raillery is but the discord of a sensitive nature marred by personal misfortune.

Woman, according to Schopenhauer, is emphatically the No. 2 of the human race, inferior to man in mental, moral, and physical capabilities. From her subordinate position in antique and Eastern life she has been removed by old French gallantry and "Germano-Christian idiocy" to a sphere of artificial equality with, nay, superiority to man. Hence the intolerable arrogance of the "lady" of modern civilisation. Woman is entirely incapable of large conception, her range of vision being circumscribed by the narrowest bounds of subjective feeling. She always remains a child, and ought never to be wholly withdrawn from the guardianship of man, be it father, husband, or son; nothing can be more monstrous than to leave children and their inheritance to the care of their mother (this sentence in Schopenhauer's mouth is, alas! but too significant). Not even the appellation of "fair" is conceded to the sex courteously so denominated. It ought to be changed into "unæsthetical;" for the love of art frequently affected by women is in reality but a means of attracting the admiration of men. Unselfish enthusiasm is altogether above their nature.

So much of this unpalatable mixture of "much error and a faint spark of truth," in which the

intellect of a great man has run to waste in the most deplorable manner. Fortunately for us and Schopenhauer, these whimsical lucubrations have no connection whatever with the essence of his doctrine, and need therefore not detain us longer.

In 1809 Schopenhauer went to the University of Göttingen, where he studied chiefly physical science, history, and philosophy, and became intimate with his fellow-student, Baron Bunsen. In 1811 the fame of the celebrated Fichte attracted him to Berlin; his *à priori* admiration of that philosopher, however, soon turned to contempt, caused partly by the hollow emptiness of his doctrine, partly by the sham pathos with which such oracular phrases as "It is, because it is as it is," were delivered. Schleiermacher, the second star of the university, did not fare much better at our philosopher's hands, who shortly but significantly describes him as a "parson" (*Pfaffe*). His utter contempt for Hegel and the official philosophers of his training is but too well known to the most occasional reader of Schopenhauer. It will be best at once to comprehend, and have done with, this unpleasant subject.

Leaving the absolute merits of Hegel, Schelling, Fichte, and other philosophers undecided, it is impossible to deny that the abuse scattered upon them broadcast by Schopenhauer is, to say the least, in exceedingly bad taste. According to him, the profes-

sional sages holding the philosophical chairs in German universities are, with few if any exceptions, a mercenary crew, thinking and expounding exactly what their paymaster, the Government, tells them to think and expound. "*Primum vivere deinde philosophari*" is their supreme maxim, to which all scruples of conscience, personal or scientific, have to yield. Hegel, the arch-humbug, is the inventor of this official state-philosophy. The pure doctrine of Kant appears hideously distorted in his writings, in so far as they can be said to convey any meaning at all. For it is his chief trick (*Kniff*) to cover his ignorance and want of genius with a veil of obscure phraseology at which the reader stands aghast, doubtful whether his own or the writer's reasoning faculties are at fault. The smaller fry—Schopenhauer continues—are naturally leagued together by common fears and interests. Members of their clique are systematically cried up, while outsiders—that is, non-Professoren der Philosophie, or, indeed, all original thinkers—are as invariably abused or silenced to death. Here, again, we touch upon personal grounds. It is well known how Schopenhauer's chief work was for a long time utterly neglected by professional critics. But let us not for that reason ascribe his undoubtedly exaggerated animadversions to the vulgar spite of an unsuccessful writer. An original thinker may claim a com-

mensurate share of notice, favourable or unfavourable, and the withholding of this notice in periodicals which, at the same time, lavished praises on mediocrities, looks remarkably like what lawyers call *malice prepense*. In such a case the argument *e silentio*, so generally and so justly suspected by the historian, is stronger than volumes of positive evidence; and great allowance ought to be made for a proud nature retaliating in a style not always strictly within the bounds of literary decorum. It is, moreover, impossible to deny that many of Schopenhauer's charges, although too sweeping in their application, are undoubtedly founded on truth. It is certain that much teaching of official philosophy has been and is still going on at German universities; equally certain that many of the chairs in these universities have been for a long time monopolised by more or less slavish disciples of Hegel. Nor can any reader of that philosopher's works blind himself to the fact that many of his high-sounding sentences contain a comparatively small residuum of sense; nay, that he systematically invented a language abominable with regard to style, and detrimental to science by the easy opportunity it offers to the dullard of clothing his commonplaces in the garb of unfathomable wisdom. Schopenhauer instinctively abhorred obscurity or timid duplicity of any kind. His intellect is piercing, and his language lucid and

forcible to a degree attained by few German writers, philosophic or otherwise. Friends and enemies admit him to be one of the greatest masters of German prose since Goethe, and no one at all familiar with metaphysical questions can fail to perceive the gist of his reasoning. It is, indeed, one of Schopenhauer's greatest merits to have divested philosophical science of the cant of the schoolroom, and he might have justly applied to himself those admirable words occurring in a letter from Bolingbroke to Swift, in which the palm is awarded to those philosophers "who strip metaphysics of all their bombast, keep within the bounds of every well-constituted eye, and never bewilder themselves whilst they pretend to guide the reason of others."

After these remarks the candid reader must decide what amount of violence ought to be deemed justifiable, or at least excusable, in an ardent lover of truth who happens to be at the same time a man of transcendent genius. Only one more circumstance —not hitherto sufficiently attended to by German critics—I should like to mention, which in some measure seems to account for the personal aversion felt by our philosopher almost at first meeting to both Fichte and Hegel. Schopenhauer, as we have seen, was by descent and education a gentleman and man of the world. He had seen many men's cities, and could converse on equal terms of social ease,

and in their own languages, with the Frenchman, the Englishman, the Italian. At the same time he was extremely sensitive, and felt the want of that perfume and charm of life, good manners, with more than ordinary acuteness. Now the German professor, as a rule, does, or at least did not at that time, count the graces amongst his numerous accomplishments, and neither Hegel nor Fichte was in this respect above the level of their class. I am far from believing that Schopenhauer would under any circumstances have become an admirer of Hegel's Absolute Reason or of Fichte's Absolute I; but that the concrete I of the professor did not to some extent intensify the odiousness of that other transcendental *ego* I am by no means prepared to affirm.

Returning now to our philosopher's career, we find that his quiet studies at Berlin have been interrupted by the threatening approach of the French army after the battle of Lützen. Schopenhauer retired to a secluded village in Saxony, where he finished his philosophic treatise, "Ueber die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde," a careful and profound investigation of the law of causality in its various applications, on the ground of which he received his degree as Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Jena. The winter of 1813–14 he passed in Weimar, where the mighty individuality of Goethe exercised its potent spell on

the young philosopher. The poet was at that time chiefly occupied with his theory of colours, and was delighted to find an intelligent listener to his favourite doctrine. Schopenhauer soon afterwards published a brochure, in which, with due respect for Goethe's experimental research and genius, the imperfections of his theory from a philosophic point of view are candidly laid bare. The reciprocal benefits derived by these two great men from their temporary intimacy were naturally not of equal value. Goethe's character and intellect at that time were too firmly established to receive strong impulses from new ideas, however potent; but to Schopenhauer the poet appeared as the highest type of perfect manhood, whose genius he worshipped to the last with never-abating enthusiasm. Goethe, however, did by no means fail to appreciate the great powers of his younger friend's mind. He speaks of him as "a remarkable head," "difficult to recognise;" and the almost melancholy resignation with which he mentions the young philosopher's dissent from his theory on important points shows how he felt the loss of such a proselyte. Some years later, when Schopenhauer's chief work appeared—

"Goethe received it with great pleasure" (I quote from a letter of Adèle Schopenhauer to her brother, then in Italy), "cut the thick volume in two, and began reading it immediately. After an hour he sent me the enclosed bit of paper, and bade me tell you that he is greatly obliged to you, and

believes the whole book to be good. Being always successful in opening books at the most remarkable places, he found and read with great pleasure the two passages marked by him" (viz., on the piece of paper above alluded to; one of these passages the reader shall see in the following). . . . "He says he is looking forward to a whole year's pleasure, for he is going to read it from beginning to end, and thinks that time will be necessary. . . . He particularly likes in your book the clearness of exposition and style, although, he says, your language is different from that of other people, and one must get used to calling things by the names you want them to have; but after having once learned that a horse is not called horse, but *cavallo*, and God perhaps *Dio*, or something else, one can read well and easily. . . . I hope soon to see him again alone, and perhaps to hear something more satisfactory. You, at least, are the only author whom Goethe reads in this manner and with so much serious interest."

Whether this more satisfactory communication was ever received we cannot tell; certain it is that Schopenhauer suspected Goethe of never having finished the book.

It was also during this stay at Weimar that Schopenhauer deeply entered into the spirit of Old Indian wisdom and religion. Together with Plato, Kant, and some of the French and English philosophers of the eighteenth century, the holy books of Buddhism were at once the favourite companions of his leisure hours and the objects of his most arduous thought.

In the spring of 1814 Schopenhauer left Weimar for Dresden, where he remained for the next four years, mainly occupied with the composition of the

great work of his life. He wrote with the eagerness and absorption of a youthful mind confident of its own power, and driven to utterance by what Goethe would have called dæmonic impulse. He himself in his old age looked back with melancholy regret on the fervid inspiration of his youth, saying that the work impressed him like that of another man. In the autumn of 1818 the manuscript was in the printer's hands, and the author on his way to Italy. Perhaps he wished to avoid the annoyance of adverse criticism; perhaps he looked forward to the surprise of a great success on his return. In either case his expectations remained unfulfilled. The "World as Will and Representation,"[1] undoubtedly the greatest production of abstract philosophy since Kant, was received by contemporary criticism with all but unbroken silence. A few insignificant notices appeared in the newspapers, and Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, with the instinct of the poet, recognised the kindred flame in Schopenhauer, whose work he compares to "a deep melancholy lake in Norway, surrounded by a dark wall of steep rocks, which never reflects the sun, but, in its depth, the starred sky at mid-day." None of the renowned

[1] The German title is "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung." In former quotations of the book I have Englished the last word by "Imagination," being guided more by the idiomatic peculiarities of the two languages than by the rules of philosophic terminology. But the *consensus doctorum* does not support my suggestion.

philosophers of the day condescended to utter a word of recognition or even of blame, with the honourable exception of Herbart, who, although diametrically opposed to his doctrine, acknowledged the importance of Schopenhauer's system. Commercially the book was a dead failure, and when, in 1844, the author reissued his work with a second supplementary volume, the greater part of the first edition was unsold.

Schopenhauer in the meantime revelled in the beauties of Italian art and nature. Antique sculpture and architecture he worshipped in preference to medieval developments; to the beauties of painting, of colour in particular, he seems to have been comparatively less sensible. Of Italian poets he most admired Petrarch, while Dante appeared to him too didactic, and Boccaccio a mere *conteur*, to whose world-wide fame he could never reconcile himself. His love of modern Italian music, and its most gifted representative, Rossini, also dates from this period. At the same time he tasted the brimming cup of life's pleasure. At Venice he lingered in the bondage of love; in Rome and Naples he freely mixed in the society of young Italians and Englishmen, his command of many languages acting as an introduction to the most distinguished circles. Surely this man, with his strong individuality, his wide sympathy, his aristocratic bearing, was not fit to be a yoke-

fellow of the ordinary pedant of a German lecture-room. Yet such for a time seemed to be his destiny. Alarmed by the threatened loss of his property, already alluded to, Schopenhauer returned to Germany with a view to finding some lucrative employment as a haven of refuge in case of need. In the spring of 1820 he began a course of lectures on philosophy in the University of Berlin, at that time the scene of Hegel's and Schleiermacher's triumphs. Be it that this competition proved too powerful for the young beginner, or that the nature of his system was found unpalatable, certain it is that Schopenhauer's success as a lecturer did not in any way surpass that of his literary efforts. Perhaps his failure was mainly due to his own want of diplomatic reticence. He always had the courage, one might almost say the recklessness, of his opinion, and in his inaugural lecture he boldly inveighed against the sophists, who by their obscure, barbarous language had fatigued and blunted the zeal for philosophic study roused by Kant's mighty speculations. Such allusions, but too well understood in the proper quarters, were of course not likely to rouse benevolent feeling in official bosoms. Altogether the atmosphere of Berlin, physical and intellectual and social, was not to the taste of Schopenhauer, and his connection with the university, which lasted, with many interruptions, more than ten years, was pro-

ductive of little scientific result and of less personal enjoyment. Much of the morbid bitterness in his later writings may be traced to the many disappointments of this period.

In 1831 he left Berlin definitely, the immediate cause being the approach of the cholera, one of the bugbears of Schopenhauer's fancy, which on a former occasion had driven him in mad flight from one city to another. Two years later he settled in Frankfort-on-the-Main, never to leave it again except on short journeys. His life there was one of almost absolute seclusion. He had no friends, and did not wish to make any; his interest in local affairs was null; and although he dined at the table-d'hôte of the best hotel, he seldom engaged in conversation, or, if he did, was soon silenced again by the commonplace replies he received in nine cases out of ten. For his talk, although never dull or abstruse, was always on high questions of literature, art, or philosophy. Small-talk in the ordinary sense he despised. The only companions of his solitude were his poodle and his books. With the former he lived on terms of intimacy, observing with keen interest its canine individuality; only in cases of exceptional ill-behaviour the opprobrious epithet of "man" was applied to it. Reading was the main occupation of Schopenhauer's life, for he did not write much, and only when urged by real inspiration. The results of his thought and

study, noted down on pieces of paper, were carefully classified and kept in separate books. Each of these books or parcels had a label attached to it indicative of the contents, or of the time and circumstances of their origin. Some of these titles are curious and characteristic of the author; for instance, "Travelling-book," "Cogitata," "Spicilegia," "Senilia," "Cholera-book" (that is, book written on his flight from the cholera), and the like. In this extreme accuracy, which also extended to the keeping of his accounts, we recognise the merchant's son.

The treasure of information acquired by his unwearying study Schopenhauer at long intervals deposited and gave to the world in his books. The chief labour of his life was done and his system established. But further to elucidate the single parts of this system, and to glean new evidence from the various fields of modern scientific discovery, Schopenhauer never grew tired, addressing his words to future generations for want of contemporary listeners. For the books [1] published by him for a long time shared the fate of his *opus magnum;* that is, all but total neglect. His name as an author was absolutely unknown. Polite people, on being accidentally intro-

[1] I subjoin the titles of these unsuccessful works, with their dates of publication: "Ueber den Willen in der Natur," 1836; "Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik," 1841; second edition of "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung," with an additional second volume, 1844.

duced to him, used to ask if he was a son of the celebrated Johanna Schopenhauer; much to his disgust, one may imagine.

This state of things lasted for eighteen years. In pronouncing the number, one hardly realises the weary length of time from lonely day to lonely day; the contempt of men, the bitterness of disappointment amassed during such a period in a proud, ambitious mind, vainly trying to spurn the success which Fate refused to grant.

This success came at last, and from a quarter from which it had been least expected and perhaps most coveted. This quarter was England. In 1851 Schopenhauer published in two volumes his "Parerga und Paralipomena," best described as a collection of essays and remarks on a variety of topics more or less closely connected with his philosophic system. This work is a mine of deepest wisdom, and at the same time one of the most entertaining books ever written. Its literary merits, both as regards manner and substance, were so striking as to make the policy of silence hitherto observed by Schopenhauer's adversaries a matter of impossibility. But the attention thus created would most likely soon have subsided again had it not been for a foreign voice suddenly and loudly raised in testimony of the neglected philosopher's merits. Such voices are listened to with particular eagerness in Germany. I am allud-

ing to a paper called "Iconoclasm in German Philosophy," and published in the *Westminster Review* of April 1853. It soon transpired that the author was Mr. John Oxenford, the well-known dramatist, critic, and scholar. The article is masterly in all respects, combining perfect grasp of the subject with lucid exposition and interesting treatment. It may be called without exaggeration the foundation of Schopenhauer's fame, both in his own and other countries. For now suddenly the prophet was acknowledged by his people. The journals began to teem with his praise; enemies entered the arena, and were met by champions no less enthusiastic; and before long the Sage of Frankfort became one of the sights of that ancient and renowned city. Schopenhauer received the incense so tardily offered at his shrine with a sort of grim complacency. Visitors he treated with politeness, reserving the protective measures of rudeness and abrupt turning of the back for extreme cases of boredom or insolence. The following remarks by an accomplished French writer, M. Foucher de Careil, by no means a *quand même* admirer of Schopenhauer, convey a lively picture of the senescent philosopher's personality and surroundings:—

"Il occupait quand je le vis" (in 1859) "le rez de chaussée d'une belle maison sur le quai de *Schöne Aussicht;* sa chambre était aussi bibliothèque. Un buste de Goethe y frappait tout

d'abord les regards; une servante et son caniche formaient toute sa domesticité. . . . Sa vie confortable et simple était celle d'un sage qui se conduit par maximes. Tout y était réglé par une prévoyante économie de ses forces et de ses ressources. . . . Il espérait que son régime de saine activité le ferait vivre jusqu'à cent ans, quand la mort le surprit a soixante-dix [it should be soixante-douze] ans. . . . Quand je le vis pour la première fois à la table de l'hôtel d'Angleterre à Francfort, c'était déja un vieillard, à l'œil d'un bleu vif et limpide, à la lèvre mince et légèrement sarcastique, autour de laquelle errait un fin sourire, et dont le vaste front estompé de deux touffes de cheveux blancs sur les côtés, relevait d'un cachet de noblesse et de distinction la physionomie pétillante d'esprit et de malice. Ses habits, son jabot de dentelle, sa cravate blanche rappelaient un vieillard de la fin du règne de Louis XV.; ses manières étaient celles d'un homme de bonne compagnie. Habituellement réservé et d'un naturel craintif jusqu'à la méfiance il ne se livrait qu'avec ses intimes ou les étrangers de passage à Francfort. Ses mouvements étaient vifs et devenaient d'une pétulance extraordinaire dans la conversation. . . . Il possédait et parlait avec une égale perfection quatre langues : le français, l'anglais, l'allemand, l'italien et passablement l'espagnol. Quand il parlait, la verve du vieillard brodait sur le canevas un peu lourd de l'allemand ses brillantes arabesques latines, grecques, françaises, anglaises, italiennes. C'était un entrain, une précision et des saillies, une richesse de citations, une exactitude de détails qui faisait couler les heures; et quelquefois le petit cercle de ses intimes l'écoutait jusqu'à minuit sans qu'un moment de fatigue se fût peint sur ses traits ou que le feu de son regard se fût un instant amorti. . . . Un allemand qui avait beaucoup voyagé en Abyssinie, fut étonné de l'entendre un jour donner sur les différentes espèces de crocodiles et sur leurs mœurs des détails tellement précis, qu'il s'imaginait avoir devant lui un ancien compagnon de voyage."

For a fuller account of Schopenhauer's life and character I must refer the reader to the biographical works by Miss Zimmern and Dr. Gwinner, the latter, one of the few intimate friends of his old

age; also to the personal reminiscences of him contained in a work on Schopenhauer by Drs. Lindner and Frauenstaedt.

To my own sketch of Schopenhauer's life I have only to add the date of his death, September 20th, 1860, and the fact that that much-desired boon, *euthanasia*, was granted to him. His housekeeper found him one morning after breakfast reclining on his sofa, lifeless. Death had come to him as a friend indeed, unannounced and uninvited, but welcome.

Perhaps the reader may think that I have with undue length dwelt upon a life great in purpose but small in incident, and exceedingly sad withal. But it seemed important to trace to their personal and temporary sources certain features of Schopenhauer's work, to which as a rule too much weight is attached in comparison with the great metaphysical truths first announced in his system. This system itself I have neither power nor wish to condense within the limits of an article. I should indeed refrain from all attempts at exegesis if the freedom with which I have spoken of the weaknesses and prejudices of the man did not make it incumbent upon me to insist with equal emphasis on the transcendent merits of the philosopher. This shall be done briefly and in a straightforward manner, without deviatory side-glances at kindred or controversial phases of contemporary thought, and with as little as possible

of that technical jargon which Schopenhauer himself has so largely succeeded in supplanting by the language of common sense.

In his "Critique of Pure Reason" the great Kant has proved the absolute impenetrability by our knowledge of the essence of things. Our sensual and intellectual organs are not adapted to such knowledge. To perceive at all we must attach to the objects of our perception certain conditions and relations, which in reality are the functions of our own brains, making such perception possible. That is, in order to become aware of objects, we must regard them in their sequence after one another (time), in their various positions of co-existence (space), and finally in their mutual relations of cause and effect (causality). The ideality (*i.e.*, objective non-reality) of time, space, and causality taught by Kant is the final death-blow at the *à priori* dogmatism of former systems. For our intellect (using the word in the most general sense), limited by the conditions alluded to, can never go beyond the appearances of things, the phenomena. To whatever extent the exact sciences may learn the various qualities of these phenomena, there always remains and must remain a residuum of unknown essence, independent of space, time, and causality, and unaltered and undiminished after all the definable qualities alluded to (for instance, in the case of matter, weight, extension,

&c.) have been deducted. This unknown essence Kant calls the "thing in itself" (*Ding an sich*), thus pronouncing the final and total bankruptcy of human reason in matters metaphysical. For what positive idea is it possible to connect with this or the still more nebulous though grander-sounding terms which later philosophers have used? Is not the "thing in itself" in reality a decorous disguise of the great unknowable, the x in the metaphysical equation of the universe?

Schopenhauer, who thus far has in essentials followed Kant, here steps in, and solves the riddle of the sphinx by the simple formula—x = Will. This transfers us at once from the indefiniteness of metaphysical terminology to the firm reality of human consciousness. We recognise the identity of our own being with the essence of all beings, and the great mystery of the world seems a total mystery no longer. The accession to our store of philosophic knowledge accruing from Schopenhauer's discovery seems to me to be incalculable. To lay open its source and import to the reader will now be my task.

All things, Schopenhauer says, we observe and observe only through the medium of time, space, and causality, with one single exception—ourselves. It is true that our body, in so far as it lives and acts, and that which makes our body live and act, our will, are objects of our own perception in the ordinary

sense. But apart from this perception, we are conscious of a vital principle in ourselves absolutely identical with the essence of our own being, and quite independent of and beyond our ordinary means of observation. This vital principle of the human organism is called Will; it is ever present to our mind, is perceived, or rather felt, by us independently of time, space, or causality; it is indeed the immanent essence of our life, the "*Ding an sich*" of our being.[1] This recognition of our own being by dint of self-intuition, Schopenhauer justly calls the only possible metaphysical or philosophic knowledge in the proper sense of the word. With every change or motion of this Will, he proceeds to show, a corresponding change in our body is indissolubly connected. Every movement of our hand, every beat of our pulse, are the effect of the action of our Will, independently of our own consciousness of such action. Our body itself, with its nerves and fibres, its blood and its brain, is indeed nothing but this Will become conscious, and observing itself through the *principium individuationis*.

With the aid of this knowledge of our being, we

[1] It is perhaps hardly necessary to remind the reader of the vital difference between will and volition. Volition is the temporary action of the will in accordance with a particular motive brought to bear upon it. It is therefore subject to time and causality, a phenomenon, in short, while will is the noumenon or essence.

now look at the world around us to find that the macrocosm of the universe is only the repetition on a gigantic scale of our own tangible identity. We perceive an infinity of outward forms, organic and inorganic; plants and birds and beasts and men all fashioned after the manner of our own body, or at least submitting to the same laws of material existence. The essence or noumenon of our own body we know to be Will; what, then, can be the one substratum of the universe but the same Will in its various stages of consciousness and individuation? There is only the alternative between the acceptance of this reality and the theory of absolute egoism, which, as Schopenhauer observes, cannot be metaphysically disproved, but has never been seriously started out of a madhouse. Will, then, Will one and universal, eternal and unchangeable in essence, although multiform in its temporal appearances, is the keynote of the harmony of the spheres, the essence of which all the wonders of the world, from the colossal immovability of a granite rock to the subtle texture of the human brain, are only signs and forms.

Let the reader pause here for a moment to realise the deep metaphysical import of this discovery. It establishes the long-sought-for unity of the world, it fills up the chasm formerly dividing mental and material forces, and at the same time it enables us,

from the safe retreat of our own existence, to glance fearlessly at the enormous heaving and struggling of the universe in which we are entire strangers no longer. It must not be thought that this ideal unity can be deduced from any previous system, or that Schopenhauer has only changed the name of universal Force or Law into Will. Of force or law we know nothing, of Will everything; *we are* Will. Besides, why introduce a difference of term where identity of essence is all-important? And how are we to know where force ends and will begins? Organism or consciousness are no criteria in the matter, as will be seen presently. Spinoza says of a falling stone, that if it were conscious it would ascribe its movement to spontaneous action. Schopenhauer adds that the stone in thinking so would be right. For the law of gravity which it obeys, and the motive which points out to human will the object of its desire, are convertible terms.

But I am anticipating. *Natura non facit saltus* was one of Schopenhauer's favourite maxims. To come from the stone to the individual action of human will, we must pass through the innumerable gradations of inorganic, organic, and animal life. All these Schopenhauer regards as the various stages of the "objectivation"—*sit venia verbo*—of the Will. The history of the world is but the history of the struggle of Will for consciousness and

individuality. To attain this it fashions itself into a thousand forms, all tending towards the same goal, and all reckless of the existence of the lower types, of which they themselves are further developments. Stone and plant, animal and man, are the landmarks of this unceasing current of desire. In man, at last, Will obtains the highest stage of its objectivation. It becomes object proper because the self-conscious subject has been created.

This, then, is what we discover in looking at ourselves and the surrounding world through the medium of Schopenhauer's philosophy. Will and interminable desire are the essence of our being, and the same desire is at the bottom of the phenomena of the world. These phenomena themselves, although we recognise their essence by analogy, surround us with bewildering horror. Everywhere we see struggle for existence, species devouring species, race contending against race;[1] even the brute earth

[1] Readers who may be struck with the affinity of Schopenhauer's doctrine to certain theories of modern science (an affinity much closer than would appear from my hurried sketch), I must remind that the German philosopher's chief work was written before 1818. But even if this precedence could not be established, Schopenhauer's claim to originality would not be in any way affected. He stands altogether on a higher level than is attainable to physical science, whose results he uses for his metaphysical purpose in the same measure as those of psychology, history, comparative philology, or any other empiric discipline. He reasons where they observe, or, at best, classify. This ought to be particularly remembered in a country where scientific men proper are apt to

seething and bubbling with internal fire ready to burst forth at any moment. Such is the spectacle of Will in contest with itself, and devouring its own children with insatiable hunger. Surely this is not a bright picture, and Schopenhauer has painted it with the sombrest hues of despair. He lays bare the revolting cruelty of Nature, which at the cost of inconceivable individual suffering creates new types only to abandon them again to the universal doom of destruction. And the same tragedy is repeated in our bosom. Here, also, desire follows desire never fulfilled, or bearing disappointment and ever new desire in its very fulfilment. Here, also, quietude and contentment are vainly sought for, the very nature of Will being unrest and insatiable longing.

The beauty and grandeur of Schopenhauer's language, rivalling the highest efforts of poetry, the force and vividness with which he depicts the nothingness and misery of existence, the halo with which he surrounds the sufferings of man as the truest and noblest aspirations of his being, all this has vastly contributed to carrying his name far beyond the circle of metaphysical inquirers.

But is there no escape from this sea of troubles, no

assume not only the name but also the function of philosophers. Why the skilful handling of the microscope or of the vivisector's knife should entitle a man to speak *ex cathedra* on metaphysical questions it is not easy to perceive.

compass to guide us to a haven of rest? Schopenhauer has pointed out such a way; he names one, and only one, all-healing balm for the wounds of mankind, and the name of his panacea is self-negation. We must retrace our steps for a moment. It has been shown that Will in its lower forms is all but void of consciousness. It blindly pursues its struggle for individualisation, and all its latent intelligent force (barely sufficient to account for the apparent teleology in Nature) is consumed in this one aim. But the case is different in the human organism. Here Will at last has become conscious of itself, and its own miseries are mirrored in the intellect. By dint of this intellect Will is now enabled to paralyse to some degree its own action; it can intensify this intellectual or contemplative power to such a degree as at last to become a calm looker-on at its own deeds. By thus renouncing itself in its highest stage of conscious development, Will may at last find that freedom from suffering, that quiescent contentment which is for ever denied to its affirmative efforts ("Bejahung und Verneinung des Willens zum Leben"). Consistently carried out, this leads to the absolute deadening of individual desire, to be met with only in certain phases of Buddhism and Christianity; and Schopenhauer by no means hesitates in adopting the extreme consequences of his doctrine. The highest stage at once

of happiness and sanctity he is prone to acknowledge in the monk of the Order of La Trappe, or still more in the Indian devotee who in passive contemplation awaits the dissolution of his embodied will to enter the realm of divine non-existence, Nirwana.

It is to this part of Schopenhauer's philosophy that I was chiefly referring when speaking of the influence of his time and of his own personal feeling on the development of his system. In his dark picture of human suffering he seems purposely to blind himself to the intense though transitory enjoyment of success long desired and well earned by arduous labour. A strong man conquering difficulties may rejoice in his power, and if his will be guided and subdued by the higher motives of love and self-sacrifice, if, in short, he be a hero in the true sense of the word, we surely are justified (on Schopenhauer's own grounds) in exalting his virtue above the impassive selfishness of a besotted monk or fakir.

There is one other means, Schopenhauer continues, of temporarily emerging from the toil and struggle of Will into the purer calm of contemplation; this means is art. The artist and he who genuinely loves art contemplate the thousandfold formations of nature and life without desire. Artistic gift, according to Schopenhauer, is the power of divesting things from their accidental surroundings, of discovering in the continual change of individual phenomena the

lasting essence of the type. Genius proper is the highest degree of this intuitive knowledge, which asks no more for the how and the when and the where, but merely for the what. This "what" Schopenhauer identifies with the idea in Plato's sense. The Platonic idea he considers to be the last stage of objectivated (I again apologise for the barbarous formation) Will previous to its becoming phenomenon. The idea lies beyond time, space, and causality, and is, therefore, not observable by our senses; but this does not preclude its metaphysical reality—a reality quite as undeniable and almost as tangible as the individual phenomena which are its subdivisions. Nature herself is continually struggling for the embodiment of this ideal type, but attains it rarely or never. How, then, can art hope to realise this archetypal beauty of form?

"People believe by imitating Nature. But how can the artist know the works of Nature that are beautiful and worthy of imitation from those that are not, unless his anticipation of the beautiful *precedes experience?* Moreover, has Nature ever produced a perfectly beautiful human being? It has been said that the artist must collect the beautiful single parts of various individuals, and compose with them a beautiful whole; —a perverse and thoughtless opinion. For we ask again, How is he to recognise that such forms are beautiful and others the reverse? *A posteriori* and from mere experience the recognition of the beautiful is impossible; it must always be at least partly *à priori*. . . . The fact of our appreciating human beauty on seeing it, and of the artist recognising it with such distinctness as to be able to reproduce it without ever having seen it, and to surpass Nature herself; this fact is explained by the other

fact that we *ourselves are* that Will, the adequate objectivation of which in its highest development is thus appreciated or discovered. . . . True genius discovers in the single phenomenon its idea. He understands the half-spoken words of Nature, and himself pronounces clearly her stammered utterance. He impresses the type of beauty vainly attempted by her in thousandfold formations on his hard marble, and places it before Nature, saying, as it were, 'See here what it was thy desire to express.'"

This is one of the two passages which the greatest artist amongst poets, Goethe, especially admired in the work of the greatest poet amongst philosophers. Such a testimonial alone ought to be sufficient to protect Schopenhauer from the suspicion of exaggerated idealism in art. He does not undervalue the necessity in artistic production of experience external and internal, of realism, as we should say; but this realism ought always to be illumined by the supernal light of ideal intuition. Neither does he confine this requirement of a typical background to representations of the beautiful or harmonious proper. Sir John Falstaff or Mrs. Gamp are realisations of Platonic ideas no less than the Madonna della Sedia or the Venus of Milo.

We now come to the peculiar position held by music in Schopenhauer's system. It is, as we have seen, the aim of all arts to express the eternal essence of things by means of the Platonic ideas, only music takes in this respect an exceptional position. Arts like painting and sculpture embody these ideas as conceived by the artist through the

medium of phenomena, the ideal value of which he shows, but only by the reproduction of their actual appearance. Even in poetry the realities of life and the visible wonders of the world, with their symbolic meaning, form an essential ingredient. Music, on the contrary, does not want, nor even allow of, a realistic conception. There is no sound in Nature fit to serve the musician as a model, or to supply him with more than an occasional suggestion for his sublime purpose. He approaches the original sources of existence more closely than all other artists—nay, even than Nature herself. His harmonies and melodies are, to speak with Schopenhauer, "as immediate and direct an objectivation or copy of the Will of the world as the world itself is—as the ideas are of which the universe of things is the phenomenon. Music is not the copy of the ideas, like the other arts, but a representation of the cosmical Will co-ordinate with the ideas themselves." In this sense the musical composer is the only creative artist. While the painter or sculptor must borrow the raiment for his idea from the human form or the landscape, the musician is alone with his inspiration. He only listens to the voice of the spirit of the world, or, which is the same, of his own spirit speaking to him as in a dream; for it is only in dreams, when the soul is not disturbed by the impression of the senses, that such a state of absorption is attainable,

and Vogl's saying of Schubert, that he composed in a state of clairvoyance, may be applied to all creative musicians. These are, in brief, the fundamental principles which Schopenhauer first among philosophers has laid down for the metaphysical essence of our art, and which Wagner has adopted without any modifications of importance in his pamphlet on Beethoven.

It ought however to be added, that in the final conclusions with regard to the concrete appearances of musical genius, which both the artist and philosopher have founded on this common basis, they differ widely. Schopenhauer considered music as an art of entirely independent and self-sufficient means of expression, the free movement of which could only suffer from a too close alliance with worded poetry. He even goes the length of highly commending Rossini's way of proceeding, in which the words of the text are treated quite *en bagatelle,* and in which therefore " music speaks its own language so purely and distinctly that it does not require the words at all, and has its full effect even if performed by instruments only." Such a sentence cannot but surprise us from the same lips which have uttered the profound thoughts referred to in the foregoing pages. But the philosopher has that in common with the poet, that his abstract contemplations arise from an intuitive consciousness, which is all but

independent of, and not always applicable to, the results of actual knowledge.

From his own point of view, Schopenhauer is no doubt right in holding that music loses some of its ethereal purity by allying itself to human speech. But, on the other hand, this very ethereal nature, and consequently indefiniteness of musical expression, necessitates its alliance with words, in order that the two combined may render the thoughts and passions of the human soul—the ultimate aim, it will be admitted, of all arts. Thus these two are by both their powers and weaknesses referred to each other's aid. The free expression of feeling in poetry is too often encumbered by the speculative structure of language; while, on the other hand, the soaring flight of music lacks a starting-point of strictly defined and recognisable pathos. If a close union of the two is effected by the link of genius—

> "If Music and sweet Poetry agree,
> As they must needs, the sister and the brother;

then the sublimest utterance of human passion is attained, and with it the nearest approach to the Platonic ideas of which man within his earthly bounds is capable. It was by proving this that Wagner, while apparently contesting Schopenhauer's argument, in reality continued it to its legitimate consequences.

RICHARD WAGNER AND HIS "RING OF THE NIBLUNG." [1]

(From the *New Quarterly Magazine*, April 1875.)

IT is my purpose in the following pages to give some account to the English reader of a work which, to say nothing of the much-disputed question as to its musical or poetical beauties, commands by its scope and dimensions the attention of every student of literature and art. I am speaking of the drama, or rather the sequence of four dramas, the tetralogy in which Wagner has grappled with those oldest and mightiest types of Teutonic lore which, in the Runic measures of the Icelandic sagas, strike us like the phantoms of a wild dream, gigantic at once in their beauty and boldness. The difficulties of handling such a subject need not be pointed out. These types, by their very essence, are removed from the sphere in which our modern thoughts and actions

[1] The above was written before the performance of the "Ring of the Niblung," and is therefore fitly supplemented by two letters written to the *Examiner* from Baireuth under the fresh impression of that performance. The reader will pardon some inevitable repetitions in the two accounts.

lie. Our customs, our morals, are unknown to them. The laws by which they act, or by the breaking of which they perish, are derived from an unwritten code of their own, being more intuitively felt than consciously known by themselves. They are led by their own free impulse where we anxiously regard the opinions of others. They represent, in short, the pure symbols of primeval forces, while we are the compounds of consecutive generations. To bridge over this chasm, dividing the old age and the new, to strike that chord of purely human feeling which binds and blends men of all times and nations, is the work of the poet; for he alone is able to combine in his own nature the consciousness of modern thought with the intensity of prehistoric energy of action. But only to a man of the highest genius can it be given to combine in his own being and to symbolically unite in his creations two principles seemingly so antagonistic Such a poet—for it is to his poetical no less, or even more, than to his musical capacity that our attention will be directed — is Richard Wagner.

Before trying to prove the truth of this assertion by an analysis of Wagner's last and greatest work, the "Ring of the Niblung," I must ask the reader to follow me in a short survey of the master's previous career; for only in this manner can it be shown how by the gradual purification of his own artistic nature

he was led to the purest sources of poetry, the mythical creations of earliest popular feeling. A few biographical facts illustrating this artistic progress may prove an addition not unwelcome to the English reader.[1]

When, in 1838, in his twenty-sixth year, Wagner began the composition of his first important opera, the German, and, indeed, the European stage, did not offer a hopeful aspect to a composer of artistic aspirations. In Germany, the later and lesser composers of the Italian and French schools, such as Bellini, Donizetti, and Adam, reigned supreme. Wagner himself has told us how the trivial productions of these men, which, as musical director of a small theatre at Riga, he had to conduct, almost brought him to despair. In Paris, on the other hand, at that time the musical centre of Europe, the great traditions of Méhul, Cherubini, and Boieldieu were more and more lost in the spectacular effects of a new school, at the head of which stood Meyerbeer, in the full splendour of a European reputation. He is the chief representative of what has been described as the "historic" opera, a branch of art which but too often renounced its high-sounding name by appeals to the taste of the vulgar. No

[1] For a more comprehensive account of Wagner's life and works, I reluctantly refer the reader to my book, "Richard Wagner and the Music of the Future," published last year (1874).

admirer of Meyerbeer's great and indisputable gifts can but regret the musical and poetical atrocities with which he and his librettists have defaced such works as "Robert le Diable" or the "Prophet." Wagner, although filled with the grand inspirations of Beethoven's genius, was too much allured by the charms of immediate success not to accommodate himself to some extent to the clamorous demands of contemporary audiences. His "Rienzi" was written with a view to its being performed at the Grand Opera in Paris, and in consequence conceived in the spirit of coarse effectiveness prevailing at that institution. Fortunately, we may say, in the interest of true art, Wagner was to be utterly disappointed in the hopes founded on this work. In vain he went to Paris to gain by personal intercession a hearing for it. Theatrical managers looked with suspicion on a young, unknown foreigner, unsupported by a clique, and without journalistic or social interest of any kind. Wagner was brought to the verge of actual starvation. He had to undergo all the horrors of musical drudgery, such as arranging popular airs for the cornet-à-piston, to secure a scanty maintenance for himself, his wife, and an enormous black dog, with which, in his worst circumstances, he refused to part. His feelings at the time he has rendered in some small stories and essays, descriptive of the bitterest pangs

of personal and artistic disappointment. But this misery eventually proved to be the cleansing fire of his artistic career, from which his strong nature sallied forth to purer and higher spheres of action. He soon felt the necessity of giving vent to his personal misery in song. Taught by misfortune, he learned to despise the gifts which Fortune refused to grant. Regardless, nay, scarcely desirous, of success, he now determined to follow only the voice of his own nature, which urged him to embody the sorrow of his heart in the creations of his genius. It was in this mood that Wagner began and finished in but seven weeks the composition of his second opera, the "Flying Dutchman." The doomed wanderer of the main, homeless, and longing for home, on the waves of a borderless sea, expressed but too well the misery of his own situation. Indeed, this personal conception of the hero of his story strikes us in Wagner's score with almost lyrical power. The pity we feel for the fate of the unfortunate sailor is therefore of a personal kind. We look upon him not as an impossible phantom, but as a man overwhelmed by sufferings, such as we ourselves have experienced, or may be subject to any day of our lives. Pity and fear—Aristotle's criteria of the tragic subject—are roused in a sense all the more intense, and all the more lasting, as, on examining our sensations, we find that they have been excited

by the purest creations of imaginative power, unaided, but also unencumbered, by references to the unwieldy facts of history or the narrow troubles of our daily existence. In this circumstance the enormous superiority of the mythical over the historical or domestic subject-matter must be discovered. The latter only represents what actually has happened; the former leads us back to the fount of unalloyed volition, from which all actions flow—to the *noumenon*, indeed, of which the world and its appearances are only the shadow. It is in this way that, for instance, the Greek tragedy combines the closest realism of psychological detail with its sublime idealism of motive.

To pacify the ire which these remarks, if misunderstood, might rouse in certain quarters, I will add parenthetically that, to my mind, the treatment of historical subjects by Shakespeare, in its bold disregard of temporal and local details, verges on the liberty of mythical, or, which is essentially the same, purely human typification.

My remarks altogether apply more to the musical than to the spoken drama. For music, by its power and weakness, is debarred from the rendering of accidental details; its ethereal being shuns the fetters of clumsy reality—from momentary facts it ascends to eternal motives.

It would exceed the limits of my purpose to show

at length how Wagner's progress from the historical to the mythical implied the relinquishing on his part of coarse spectacular for purely artistic effects, or, to say the same in other words, how the librettist developed into the poet. Only a few words ought to be added as to the manner in which this change reacted on his musical style. It is well known that Wagner abolished the traditional forms of absolute music, such as aria, duet, and finale, supplanting them by a mode of utterance entirely founded on the requirements of the dramatic situation. This reformatory act, a Wagneromastix would boldly assert, was an act of premeditation founded on speculative theories, and therefore devoid of artistic spontaneity. The groundlessness of such an accusation might easily be proved from intrinsic reasons. Nevertheless, it may not seem undesirable to hear the master's own testimony on a question which, besides bearing on our immediate subject, is of vital importance for the history of musical progress.

"The plastic unity and simplicity," Wagner says, "of the mythical subject-matter allowed of the concentration of the action on certain important and decisive points, and thus enabled me to rest on those fewer scenes with a perseverance sufficient to expound the motive down to its ultimate dramatic consequences. The nature of the subject, therefore, could not induce me, in sketching my scenes, to con-

sider in advance their adaptability to any particular musical form, the particular kind of musical treatment being necessitated by these scenes themselves. It could not enter my mind to engraft on this *my* musical form, growing as it did out of the nature of the scenes, the traditional forms of operatic music, which could only have marred and interrupted its organic development. I therefore never thought of contemplating on principle, and as a deliberate reformer, the destruction of the aria, duet, and other operatic forms; but the dropping of these forms followed consistently from the nature of my subjects."

The ultimate result of a reform begun in this spontaneous manner was the great cycle of tragedies which forms the subject of this essay. But before we enter upon this, we must cast a passing glance on the intervening links of a chain of development, extending from an all but blindfold groping for a new mode of utterance in the "Flying Dutchman," to the fullest light of artistic purpose in the "Niblungen."

In the first-mentioned opera, Wagner, as was mentioned before, left the domain of pseudo-historic realism for that of mythical truth; but a change of purpose does not always, and did not in this case, imply a fully proportionate change of means. It is, therefore, no matter for surprise to see some of the

hereditary evils of the old opera reappear in this early attempt at purer dramatic expression. The diction and versification, although by far superior to the ordinary libretto, show here and there traces of that slipshod disregard of rhyme and reason which the imperturbable patience of an operatic audience is wont to tolerate. Some of the characters, moreover, as particularly the disappointed lover and tenor of the piece, are fashioned after operatic patterns. The music also occasionally suffers from what may be described as want of grasp and consistency. The old forms of absolute music are for the greater part abandoned; but what remains of them is sufficient to mar that absolute congruity between poetical intention and musical expression so characteristic of Wagner's later style. I need not add that these remarks are not made with an intention to disparage the beauties of an opera which in many respects remains unsurpassed by its own or any other composer's works. The weirdness of the Northern seas, with the doomed hero tossed on their pitiless waves, is depicted musically in the boldest touches. Readers who have witnessed the performance of the "Flying Dutchman" at Drury Lane (the only performance of a work by Wagner ever witnessed (in 1857) at an English theatre), may judge of the deep impression produced even by that cold and uncongenial rendering.

Wagner's next work, the opera "Tannhäuser," marks a further step in advance. The hero of the drama is a medieval knight and singer, who, enthralled by the voluptuous charms of Venus, tarries in the mountain of the goddess, but is ultimately saved by the self-surrendering love of a pure woman. There is a certain parallelism between the subjects of this and the last-mentioned opera. Both Senta and Elizabeth free their lovers from the doom hovering over them; both die in their noble endeavours. This idea of the redeeming power of woman's love is characteristic of Wagner's art; its ultimate completion we shall find in the last scene of his *opus magnum*, the Niblungen drama. Into the musical and poetical beauties of "Tannhäuser" we can enter no further. Suffice it to say that, compared with the "Flying Dutchman," its music is richer in melodious and harmonious combinations, its poetry more passionate, and therefore more expressive of that essence of human pathos which is at the bottom of all legendary lore. Style and verse are, moreover, greatly improved, and the diction is much above the average even of the spoken drama. The music also evinces Wagner's further progress towards greater force and conciseness; still the victory of the purely *dramatic* over the *operatic* is not yet quite decisive —not as decisive, for instance, as is "Lohengrin," the master's next work, which was finished in

March 1848, nearly three years after the completion of "Tannhäuser."

In "Lohengrin," the positions of hero and heroine appear reversed. The Knight of the Swan leaves his celestial abode to become the champion of a maiden falsely accused of the murder of her brother. As the price of her liberty, he demands Elsa's promise never to ask him who he is or whence he came to her rescue; but she, following that innate desire of human affection to wholly comprehend and be one with the beloved object, asks the fatal question, which seals her own doom. In the carrying out of this idea, Wagner for the first time displays the full power of his dramatic gift. Lohengrin, the representative of divine power, is surrounded with a halo of mystic splendour to which the tender loveliness of Elsa's nature forms the charming counterpart. The action of the piece is full of interest, and the minor characters are boldly designed and artistically grouped round the centre figures. The music also attains a freedom and intensity of expression previously unknown. The flow of melody is no longer led into the artificial channels of arias, finales, &c., but seems to spring immediately from the urgencies of the dramatic situation. Everything shows that we are nearing a climax of new artistic power.

The first performance of "Lohengrin" is con-

nected with one of the brightest episodes of Wagner's chequered career — his friendship with Liszt. It will be remembered that the completion of "Lohengrin" fell into one of the stormiest years of Continental history, when the revolutionary rising in Paris seemed to threaten destruction to the thrones of the neighbouring countries. Wagner lived at that time in Dresden as conductor of the Royal Opera. He was in a state of morbid disappointment caused by the unfavourable reception of his works at the large theatres, and still more by the thoroughly inartistic cliquism by which most of these institutions were governed. A change at any price seemed desirable under such circumstances. He, therefore, although little interested in politics, took an active part in the revolutionary movement, and when this was crushed, he had to fly the country. He first went to Weimar, where Liszt at that time was conducting the small but excellent opera. "The very day," Wagner writes in 1851, "when my personal danger became a certainty, I saw Liszt conducting a rehearsal of my 'Tannhäuser,' and was astonished at recognising my second self in his achievement. What I had felt in inventing this music he felt in performing it; what I wanted to express in writing it down he said in making it sound. Strange to say, through the love of this rarest friend, I gained, at the moment of

becoming homeless, a real home for my art, which I had longed for, and sought for always in the wrong place. . . . At the end of my last stay in Paris" (in 1850), "when, ill, miserable, and despairing, I sat brooding over my fate, my eye fell on the score of my 'Lohengrin,' totally forgotten by me. Suddenly I felt something like compassion that this music should never sound from off the death-pale paper. Two words I wrote to Liszt; his answer was the news that preparations were made for the performance on the largest scale the limited means of Weimar would permit. Everything that men and circumstances could do was done in order to make the work understood. . . . Success was his reward, and with this success he now approaches me saying, 'Behold, we have come so far; now create us a new work, that we may go still further.'"

Wagner's response to this call was the drama of the "Niblungen," originally intended for Weimar, although never performed there. The work was planned on a much smaller scale than that on which it was ultimately executed. At first Wagner treated the "Death of Siegfried" as a separate piece; but soon he found that the narrative portions necessary to explain the motives of the action would reach undue dimensions, and were, moreover, so eminently dramatic in themselves as absolutely to require the addition of a second, or rather first, *i.e.*, introductory

piece. This was to be called "Siegfried's Youth." But here Wagner found his former experience repeated, and twice again he was compelled to condense the old epical types into dramatic creations, till at last the trilogy of the "Ring of the Niblung," with an introductory piece, the "Rhinegold," was completed. The poetry, in its present form, was finished by the end of 1852, and during the three following years Wagner wrote the music to the "Rhinegold" and to the first part of the trilogy, the "Valkyrie." About this time his great plan was interrupted by another work of no less excellence and grandeur. It was "Tristan and Iseult," by many believed to be the highest effort of its composer's genius. Its subject may be considered to be in a manner complementary of the Niblungen drama. For the Celtic Mabinogion and the Eddic Sagas are the two cycles of epics from which a truly national poetry of both Celtic and Germanic races must draw its mythical inspiration—an inspiration quite as necessary to our modern dramatists as the tales of Homer and Hesiod were to Sophocles and Æschylus.

The composition of the "Niblungen" was resumed in 1859, in which year Wagner began the music to the second part of the trilogy—"Siegfried." This occupied him, with many interruptions (one of which was the composition of a comic opera, "The Master-

singers of Nurnberg"), for nearly thirteen years. The musical execution of the final drama, "The Götterdämmerung" ("Dusk of the Gods"), has been finished only a short time ago. Its publication is anxiously expected by the admirers of the previous parts.

It may be easily perceived that in the present state of theatrical affairs on the Continent, a work of this scope, even if accepted for performance, would have little chance of an appropriate rendering by mediocre singers, or of a congenial reception on the part of the *blasé* public of the German capitals. Wagner, indeed, never intended his work for the ordinary operatic stage, and has persistently refused to take an active interest in the performance of parts of his work attempted at Munich. His desire was to see the "Niblungen" performed at a theatre erected for the purpose, and by a select company, in the manner of a national festival; for only in this manner would it be possible to remove both audience and artists from the atmosphere of ordinary theatrical shows.

A scheme of such vastness appeared at first Utopian, and was, indeed, treated with scorn and ridicule by an inimical press. But in spite of these attacks, the previous works of Wagner began to take a firmer and firmer hold on the mind of the public; the reawakening of patriotic feeling after the

French war may have contributed to direct the attention of the best among the German nation to a work so eminently national both in its sources and manner of execution. When, therefore, a few years ago, the late celebrated pianiste Tausig, in connection with a small number of artistic friends, decided upon appealing boldly to Wagner's admirers for the means necessary to carry out the master's original intention, this appeal was responded to with enthusiasm. Wagner Societies for the purpose alluded to were founded not only in all important German cities, but also in Brussels, Milan, New York, London, &c., and the performance of the work under the master's own direction at Baireuth in 1876 is no longer a matter of doubt.

So much about the chronological growth and the immediate prospects of a work to the closer analysis of which we now must direct our attention. But before entering upon this task I must beg leave to inform the reader what he may and what he may not expect to find in the following pages. First of all, it is not my intention to write a criticism in the ordinary sense of the word, that is, to find fault with the details of a work which, by its organic continuity, defies microscopic treatment. Such a display of critical acumen would be all the more ill-advised, as in many cases it is impossible to judge of the effects of certain scenes before the whole has been

tested by an actual performance on the stage, for which it is so eminently designed. It would be equally premature to criticise, or even to analyse, in detail, the score of the "Niblungen," the last part of which, as was mentioned before, is as yet unpublished; besides, like its poetical foundation, the music cannot be fully appreciated without a previous embodiment in sound and action. A detailed analysis, moreover, to be at all comprehensible, would require numerous illustrations in musical type. My present purpose is altogether more of an exegetical than of a critical nature. I shall attempt, as far as my space will permit, to give an idea to the reader of the grandeur of the old Teutonic types, seen through the medium of a great modern poet's recreative power; and at the same time try to show, as far as this can be done in words, how, by the blending of the musical with the dramatic form, a new style of art has been created, differing from and superior to what either music or poetry could ever achieve in their separate spheres.

The musical introduction to the "Rhinegold" is founded on the chord of E flat, at first intoned in long-drawn notes, which soon dissolve into shorter rhythmical formations, rising and falling alternately from the lowest to the highest octaves, like the murmuring waves of a rapid river. A gentle, melodious phrase is gradually developed, to the sounds of

which the curtain rises. We see the bed of the river Rhine, amongst the scraggy rocks and cliffs of which three water-nymphs, the "Daughters of the Rhine," are disporting themselves, singing their songs, always accompanied by the gentle wavy notes of the orchestra. But soon their merry gambols are interrupted by the appearance of Alberich, king of the Niblungs, a mischievous dwarf, who, ascending from the dark regions of his nebulous kingdom, is filled with amorous longing for the lovely water-maidens. A playful scene now begins between them, the maidens pretending to yield to the desire of the gnome, and escaping his embrace just when he thinks his happiness secured. The musical accompaniment to the scene is extremely graceful, and particularly the mock-tenderness of the girls finds an expression, the sly humour of which little forebodes the grave tragical accents soon to follow. For here we are still amongst elementary beings, free and impulsive, like the water and air in which they move, unconscious of good or evil.

Suddenly a glow breaks through the waves, brightening their sombre green as with a tinge of fire. The Rhine Daughters greet it with joyful acclamations; Alberich stands aghast at the mysterious splendour. On his inquiring, the heedless girls tell him that the gleam is caused by the hidden gold which they are bound to watch. He who gained

the gold would be lord of the wide earth; but no one can wield the power of the treasure unless he renounce the bondage of love, cursing its joy; a hopeless case, the girls playfully add, for the love-sick dwarf. But Alberich, smitten with the hope of boundless power, utters the fatal curse to love's pleasure, and, before the maidens can prevent it, lays hold of the treasure, with which he disappears. Night suddenly closes over the scene; the wailing cries of the Rhine Daughters are heard in the darkness. Thus the gold, which could be harmless only with the passionless children of Nature, is taken from their guard to work its baneful way amongst gods and men.

From the depths of the Rhine we are transferred to a high ridge of mountains. Wotan, the supreme god of Northern mythology, lies asleep in a flowery meadow, Fricka, his wife, sitting by his side. The rays of the rising sun are reflected from the battlements of a splendid castle, which stands on a high rock in the background. A solemn melody, expressive of divine splendour and dignity, is played by the orchestra. Wotan speaks in his dream; he tells of the palace built for him by the giants, as at once the symbol and safeguard of his power. But Fricka wakes him from his fond delusions; she reminds him that her sister, Freia, the goddess of youth and love, has been given to

the giants as security for the payment of their labour: unless ransom can be found, the goddess will become the slave of the clumsy monsters. Freia herself now appears, followed by Fafner and his brother Fasolt, who claim her as the price of Walhall, the castle they have built for Wotan. In vain the god resists their demand. The giants stand on their bond. Wotan has to confess that his own power rests on the inviolability of his plighted promise. His duty it is to watch over oath and bond; to break his word would be suicidal. So he has to devour his wrath, and even to protect the giants from the interference of two other mighty gods, Donnar and Froh, who have hastened to the assistance of their sister.

At this juncture a new god appears on the scene. It is Loge, the god of fire, fixed by Wotan in permanent shape, but still full of the wildness of his native element; the other gods view him with ill-disguised suspicion. Loge has been called the Mephistopheles of Teutonic mythology, and some features of the negative, sarcastic nature of the latter may undoubtedly be recognised in Wagner's conception of the Northern god. It is by his advice that Wotan has entered into the fatal treaty with the giants, and to him, therefore, the gods look for a means of finding ransom for their threatened sister. Urged by Wotan, he at last discloses the secret of the Rhine treasure,

which Alberich has in the meantime fashioned into a ring, the symbol and source of unlimited power. This ring alone, Alberich adds, can compensate the heart for the loss of love's pleasure. Gods and goddesses listen eagerly to his description, the magic power of the gold and its splendour moves their innermost desire; even the giants cannot resist its temptation, and they declare their willingness to release their lovely prey for the possession of the gold. But Wotan's pride revolts at the thought of his becoming the tool of the giants in depriving Alberich of his spoil. Indignant at his refusal, Fafner and Fasolt carry off Freia, anxiously watched by the gods as they heavily thread their way over stock and stone down to the valley of the Rhine. Suddenly a change comes over the scene; mists rise on all sides, which give a pale, elderly appearance to the gods; Loge reminds them that they have not tasted the apples of Freia's garden that day, the fruits of the goddess of youth, which alone secure the gods from the influence of time. This at last decides Wotan; to preserve his eternal youth he waives his dignity. The giants are recalled, and Wotan and Loge set out on their journey to Alberich's kingdom, to gain the ring by force or cunning. We here touch upon one of the keynotes of the whole drama. The gods, by their desire of splendour, have incurred a debt to their

enemies the giants; to pay this they now are intent on depriving a robber of his spoil, their motive being not to return it to the lawful owners as becomes their office, but to buy back their forfeited youth. In this act of wilful selfishness lies the germ of their doom.

The next-following scene, in its broad touches of primitive coarseness, reminds one of the satyr drama of the antique tragedy. The prelude, with its strong rhythmical accents in the orchestra, accompanied by the noise of hammers and anvils behind the scenes, indicates that we are approaching the country of Alberich, the king of the Niblungs, whom, by the power of his ring, he compels to find new treasures in the bowels of the earth, and work them into splendid ornaments for his pleasure. His brother, Mime, is one of the chief sufferers, especially since he has been found out in trying to conceal for his own benefit a magic cap or helmet wrought of the Rhine treasure. This is the well-known Tarn-cap, the Northern equivalent of Perseus' helmet, which makes its wearer invisible, and also enables him to take the semblance of any living thing. Cruel flagellations, alternating with the cries of the victims, are depicted by the music in the most realistic manner, the grotesqueness of the whole scene being in exquisite contrast with the passionate but aristocratic bearing of the upper gods.

On their first appearance, Wotan and Loge are

received by Alberich with undisguised suspicion; but Loge soon succeeds in acting on the vanity of the dwarf by expressing doubts as to the boasted power of the Tarn-helmet. Thrown off his guard, Alberich changes himself into the shape of a giant-worm, and afterwards into that of a toad. As soon as the latter appears, Wotan puts his foot on it, Loge simultaneously snatching the magic cap from its head. Alberich is fettered and carried off by the gods, who command him to bid the Niblungs bring the treasure from their subterranean regions. At last he is compelled to give up the ring, by means of which he had hoped to recover his lost power; but before doing so he attaches his curse to the gold, which henceforth shall be fatal to its owner, as it has already been to himself, by its own baneful essence. To the giants, who now reappear, Wotan offers gold sufficient to cover their prisoner from head to foot. Freia is placed between two huge poles, and the rapacious pair begin at once to heap the precious toys round the goddess. The whole treasure is thus consumed, and yet a chink remains through which the lovely victim remains visible to her rude oppressors. The giants demand of Wotan to stop the opening first with the Tarn-helmet and after it with the ring, but the latter the god refuses to part with. The giants wrathfully threaten to break the bargain, and are on the point of carrying off the goddess a second time,

when, from the deepest recesses of the mountain rises up the mysterious form of Erda (Hertha), the pantheistic symbol of Earth as the principle and origin of all life. In solemn words she warns Wotan of the curse attaching to the ring, reminding him at the same time of the ultimate doom which threatens the gods. Thus admonished, Wotan throws the ring on the golden heap, which the giants immediately set about collecting in an enormous sack; but no sooner have they touched the ring than its curse begins to act. Both claim its exclusive possession, and in the quarrel thus excited Fafner kills his brother Fasolt. The gods stand in silent amazement, recognising the truth of Erda's warning. But no dark foreboding can for long disturb the calm serenity of their supreme existence. The mists hanging around them are dispersed into brilliant lightning by the hammer of Donnar, and from amidst the black clouds Froh has thrown a rainbow over the cleft dividing the gods from their new habitation. On this bridge they enter their splendid abode, heedless of the complaints of the Rhine Daughters and of Loge's muttered threats of their approaching destruction.

The "Rhinegold" has been compared by German critics to the Prologue in heaven which Goethe has prefixed to his "Faust" tragedy. Both pieces have, indeed, the feature in common of foreshadowing in the minds of divine beings the human actions and

sufferings of the coming drama. Here, however, the analogy ends. The "Lord" in Goethe's poem is the placid omnipotent ruler of heaven and earth, inapproachable alike to fear and passion. Wagner's gods, on the other hand, are themselves acting a tragedy of no less import and of no less sadness than the human beings to be afterwards introduced. They are subject to rage and envy, they covet the luring gleam of the gold, and the joy of their divine existence is marred by the consciousness of an inevitable doom. They are, indeed, tragic characters in the deepest sense of that word. Wagner, in making use of this feature, has succeeded in rousing our human interest in beings seemingly so remote from our feeling. The idea itself, however, of a final destruction of this world and of the gods ruling over it pervades the whole system of old Northern religions, distinguishing it in that respect from the mythologies of all other nations. It is true that the secret cult of Bacchus or Adonis celebrates the death of that god, but the yearly recurrence of that event, with its regenerative counterpart, indicates its scarcely disguised symbolism of the change of seasons. In the deeper mind of the Germanic nations, a story perhaps originally also indicative of a natural event, was at an early period invested with a permanent, and, in a certain sense, ethical character. The very symbol of the world, the World-ash Yggdrasil,

with a serpent gnawing its root and a stag and goat nibbling its foliage, is an image of decay and mortality; the final victory, on the other hand, of the powers of darkness and chaos (dark elves and giants) over the upper gods (Aisir, from a beam or column, *i.e.*, prop of the world), the representatives of law and order, is brought about, not without some moral guilt on the part of the latter, as is proved by the hope of the ultimate reconstruction of a purified world. This idea of a possible redemption of what was divine in the old fabric, even after the "Dusk of the Gods"(Ragnarökr), Wagner has also introduced into his poem, relieving in this manner the feeling of hopeless doom which forms the dark background of his tragedy.

In connection with these considerations, it will be well to add a few remarks as to the original sources of Wagner's poem, and the way in which he has remodelled the old story for his dramatic purposes. The oldest Teutonic traditions of national gods and heroes contained in popular tales and songs were, at an early date, collected by the priests and scholars of that branch of the great nation which had settled in Iceland. The noble zeal shown in preserving Pagan traditions does great credit to the wisdom of the Christian priests of that island, who, differing in this from the intolerant destructiveness of their brethren in most other countries, carefully preserved every

trace of the early history of their nation. The two most important collections of Sagas in Iceland are the two Eddas, *i.e.*, "great-grandmothers," a name applied to them owing to their antiquity. The elder Edda, written in alliterative verse, is said to have been composed by Sarmundr the Wise, who died in 1133; the younger, or Snorra Edda, a prose tale of similar contents, is conjecturally ascribed to Snorra Sturluson, a priest who lived in Iceland from 1178 to 1241. Besides these, I mention the Saga of the Volsungs, as bearing on the subject of Wagner's dramas. The same stories which thus were preserved in Iceland retained a precarious existence in the floating traditions of wandering poets and singers in Germany. Now and then parts of these lays were written down, or even translated into Latin, by the monks; but this was never done in as systematic a manner as in Iceland, the Christian collectors endeavouring, moreover, frequently to efface the traces of Pagan mythology from their versions. Hence the scanty remains of mythological lore in the Old German language. But in another respect Germany has well deserved of our story, by fixing it locally, and connecting it with its most beautiful river, the Rhine. From the Rhine Alberich robs the fatal gold, and to its waves it must be restored before the tale is told and gods and men may rest from their troubles. About the end of the

twelfth century, that is, during the highest bloom of the chivalrous epic in Germany, the popular songs relating to our story were collected in the form of a continuous narrative, known as the "Niblungenlied" —how and by whom remains at the present day a subject of internecine dispute amongst the different schools of German philologists. In this poem, or collection of poems, the story appears entirely divested of its mythical character, and intermixed to a great extent with local traditions and later historical events.

In all essentials Wagner has justly preferred the pure Icelandic sources to the mixed versions of later ages, changing, however, the Icelandic names for their German equivalents, such as Odin for Wotan, Sigurd for Siegfried, and his mother, Hiordys, for Sieglinde. In a general way, it may be affirmed that the incidents of Wagner's drama also occur in the Icelandic Sagas; only the manner in which these incidents are connected with each other and condensed into a dramatic organism, as also the deep transcendant meaning which is imparted to them, betray the hand of the modern poet. One example of Wagner's mode of proceeding must suffice here. The chief compounds of the subject of the "Rhinegold" are, as the reader will remember, the building of Walhall by the giants, their quarrel with the gods about the payment, their abduction of the goddess of youth, and the robbing of the gold by the

gods to pay the ransom. Every one of these incidents occurs in either of the Eddas, but all in separate tales, and without any connecting link amongst them. The stupid giants are cheated by the gods in a manner not concerning us here; the latter take the gold from Andwari the dwarf, to gain back their own liberty. The stones, indeed, lie there like costly jewels, waiting for the artificer's hand to join them together as a diadem of matchless beauty. This task of combining the *disjecta membra* of a deep though disturbed tradition, and of dramatically enforcing their half-forgotten, if ever consciously felt, meaning, Wagner has performed in a manner which displays no less reverence for the spirit of his original than power of recasting it in his individual mould.

Before resuming my analysis, scene by scene, of Wagner's drama, I will anticipate a few facts which gradually transpire in the course of the dialogue, but which I think it better for the reader to learn here. Wotan, to know the causes of his approaching doom, has descended to the mystic dwelling of Erda, whom, by the charm of his wooing love, he has compelled to disclose the future to him. Told of the danger threatening him if ever Alberich should regain possession of the ring, Wotan thinks of means to defend his realm against the powers of darkness. The fruit of his and Erda's love, a beautiful maiden, hight Brynhild, with eight of her

half-sisters, is chosen by Wotan as Valkyrie, that is, "chooser of the elected." It is the duty of these maidens to excite valiant men to strife and battle, and to carry the souls of the fallen heroes up to Walhall, there to live in joy with All-father Wotan, and at the same time to protect his high hall from the enemy's attack. Still more anxious is Wotan to regain possession of the magic ring, or at least to see it wrested from his enemies' power. Being precluded by his plighted promise from effecting this desired issue, Wotan discerns his only hope to rest in the free action of a god-inspired hero, who, guided by his own courage, and regardless of laws human or divine, would win the treasure. To create such a hero, Wotan has assumed the form and name of Volsung, a valorous man, and to him a human wife has borne twin children, Siegmund and his sister Sieglinde. With his son he has roamed through the wild forest, both of them clad in the skins of wolves, a feature which also occurs in the Volsunga Saga, where, however, a sort of transformation into a wolfish nature seems to be indicated. Suchwise, the god prepares Siegmund for the great task assigned to him. From his mother and sister he has been separated in earliest childhood.

The orchestral introduction to the "Valkyrie" is of a wild, stormy character. The incessant triplets in

the violins are suggestive of hail and rain beating on the leaves of tall trees, while the rolling figure in the bass seems to indicate the angry voice of thunder. When the curtain rises, we see the interior of a house roughly built of timber. A fire is burning on the hearth. In the centre of the empty room is seen the stem of a mighty ash, the foliage of which spreads over the roof. Siegmund enters in a state of exhaustion and sinks down by the hearth. Sieglinde comes from an interior chamber and gazes, astonished, on the stranger. Observing his exhausted state, she refreshes him with water; both look in each other's eyes with increasing though hardly conscious interest. To Siegmund's questions Sieglinde replies that he sees before him the wife of Hunding, whose arrival is soon announced by the sound of his horse's hoof. On entering the room, Hunding at once notices the resemblance between the pair, but without further remark bids his guest welcome. Siegmund is asked to tell his adventures, and, beginning with his early life, he narrates how, coming home from the forest, his father and he found their home destroyed by enemies, the mother killed, the sister carried off; how after that they lived the lives of outlaws, at war with the world, till at last his father was taken from him. Separated from him in battle, Siegmund had followed his trace everywhere, but at last finding an

empty wolf-skin, his father's dress, concluded him to be slain. His last fight, Siegmund continues, has been to protect a maiden from her own kin, who wished to wed her to an unloved man. Overpowered by their number, and after his spear and shield had been broken, he had been compelled to fly and seek rest for the night in Hunding's house. "For one night," his host replies, "my house shall be thy refuge, but to-morrow see to thy weapon, for thou shalt pay with thy life for the dead." For Hunding himself is one of the tribe with whom Siegmund had fought that day.

Siegmund, left alone in the darkening room, muses over his threatening fate: without means of defence, he has fallen into the hands of his bitterest enemy. Suddenly the piled-up logs drop in a heap, and from the sparks a sharp light is thrown on the spot in the ash-stem which Sieglinde, on being driven from the room by her husband, has pointed out with her look, and where now the hilt of a sword is seen more plainly. Sóon Sieglinde reappears. Her husband, she says, lies in deepest slumber, owing to the night-drink she has mixed for him. She has come to show a weapon to her friend—a weapon destined only for the bravest of the brave. The description of her wedding to Hunding, to whom she has been sold against her will, and the account she gives of the mysterious weapon in the ash-tree, tallies almost

literally with the Volsunga Saga. I therefore prefer to let the old tale speak for itself, interpreted to the English reader by the incomparable translation of Mr. W. Morris and Mr. Magnusson. The scene is in Hunding's house, in the same room in which Siegmund and Sieglinde have met:—

"The tale tells that great fires were made endlong the hall, and the great tree aforesaid stood midmost thereof; withal folk say, that whereas men sat by the fires in the evening, a certain man came into the hall unknown of all men; and such like array he had, that over him was a spotted cloak, and he was barefoot, and had linen breeches knit tight even unto the bone, and he had a sword in his hand as he went up to the Brandstock, and a slouched hat upon his head: huge he was, and seeming-ancient and one-eyed.[1] So he drew his sword and smote it into the tree-trunk, so that it sank in up to the hilt; and all held back from greeting the man. Then he took up the word and said: Whoso draweth this sword from this stock, shall have the same as a gift from me, and shall find in good sooth that never bare he better sword in hand than is this. Therewith out went the old man from the hall, and none knew who he was or whither he went. Now men stand up, and none would fain be the last to lay hand to the sword, for they deemed that he would have the best of it who might first touch it; so all the noblest went thereto first, and then the others one after other; but none who came thereto might avail to pull it out, for in nowise would it come away, howsoever they tugged at it."

"This is the sword," Sieglinde continues (in the drama); "for none but thee was it destined." But

[1] This description of Wotan's dress, in his character as the "Wanderer," is typical in the old stories. One of his eyes he had given to the giant Mimir for a drink from the fount of wisdom, a circumstance the explanation of which I willingly leave to the expounders of the "solar myth."

soon these warlike thoughts give way to tenderer emotions. An irresistible power seemed to draw the pair together when first they gazed in each other's eyes. Now that they are alone together in a splendid night of spring, their hearts beat stronger and stronger; closely they stand in each other's embrace. The lyrical pathos of the situation has here given Wagner an opportunity for a song of spring and love sweeter, perhaps, than ever music and poetry combined to bring forth. Not being able to give in words an idea of the two arts united, I will at least copy the verses, availing myself of the English version contained in Mr. Alfred Forman's rendering of the Niblungen drama:—

SIEGMUND.

"Winter storms have waned—at the wakening May,
and mildly spreads—his splendour the Spring;
he buoys himself—on bending breezes
wonders wake—upon his way;
over field and forest—floats his freshness,
wide and lightening—laughs his look.
He sounds in boundless singing—of buoyant birds,
sweetening breath—his bosom swells:
from his blood are warmed and wakened—wildering
blossoms,
seed and shoot—he sends from his heart.
With winsome weapons' flash—he forces the world;
winter and storm have waned—at his steadfast war:
with dint of his dreadless strokes—the stubborn
doors he has daunted,
whose hindering hinge—withheld us from him.
To find his sister—he sets his flight,

'twas Love that lured the Spring;
behind our hearts—she deeply was hid;
now let her laugh to the light.
The bride and the sister—is free to the brother;
the walls are waste—that held them away;
greeting together—they shout as they go,
for Spring has lighted on Love!"

Over the further development of this marvellous love-scene we must pass rapidly. Sieglinde, reminded by the stranger's tale of the scenes of her early infancy, and struck with the resemblance of his features to her own, asks for his real name, which Siegmund no longer withholds from her. "If thou art Siegmund," she exclaims, "this sword has been destined for thee by our father, Volsung." Whereat Siegmund, with a mighty wrench, tears the holy weapon out of the stem. But this disclosure cannot quench the thirst of their passion, and the curtain drops over the unfortunate pair. The musical structure of this duet, with its gradual rise from anxious doubt to dithyrambic passion, has been called the highest flight of Wagner's muse, and it certainly holds its own, even if compared with those other masterpieces of concerted music, the duets between Senta and the Flying Dutchman, Elsa and Lohengrin, Iseult and Tristan, or indeed Siegfried and Brynhild in the second part of the present work. But however much we may be impressed by the bold and again so infinitely tender strains of

this music in reading it, the real value of a conception so intensely dramatic can be realised only by an actual embodiment on the stage.

A few words ought to be added in explanation of an episode at first sight so strange, not to say shocking, to our modern feeling, as the one just mentioned. The illicit love between Siegmund and Sieglinde is an important—nay, vital—ingredient of the whole story, because Siegfried, the offspring of their union, must have the unmixed blood of Volsung—that is, of Wotan the god—in his veins, in order to fulfil his mission. Thus, being unable to omit the incident altogether, Wagner has acted rightly in treating it in the simple, open, and therefore chaste, spirit of the old Northern myth itself. The law which debars blood relations from mutual passion is essentially founded on the idea of the family. Animal nature knows of no such obstacle, and all the cosmogonies which, like the Pentateuch, derive the procreation of the human race from one couple, imply intermarriages of brothers and sisters. The tragic guilt of Sieglinde, therefore, does not lie in her love for her brother, but in the breach of her marriage vow. The punishment of this guilt is now approaching rapidly.

The second act introduces us to Brynhild, Wotan's favourite daughter, amongst the Valkyries. The god bids her assist his son Siegmund in the impend-

ing combat with Hunding, and she joyfully assents to his command, when suddenly Fricka's chariot, drawn by two wethers, approaches, and the Valkyrie leaves her father to abide the brunt of his wife's indignation. The next scene reminds one somewhat of the domestic quarrels of the gods in Homer, but for its higher tone of tragic pathos. Fricka bitterly complains of the injury done to her, the protectress of marriage, by Siegmund and his sister. Firmly she demands of Wotan the punishment of his children. In vain the god pleads the power of love in favour of the culprits; in vain he reminds Fricka that only compelled by force Sieglinde became the wife of an unloved husband. Not even the hope of the gods' own preservation founded on Siegmund is of avail against the wrath of the goddess, and at last Wotan, in bitterest grief, has to bow down to established law and seal his own doom by relinquishing his chosen hero. The curse of the gold is heavy on him, he complains to Brynhild; Alberich's son, begotten without love by the enemy of love, will conquer the gods; and his own son, who alone could have averted the fate, is now to be sacrificed to Fricka's jealousy.

Brynhild, at Wotan's command, unwillingly descends to where Siegmund and Sieglinde are resting on their flight. The horn of the pursuing Hunding

is heard in the distance; Sieglinde lies swooning in her brother's arms, when the shield-maiden greets the hero with the message of his approaching end, telling him at the same time that the joys of Walhall are awaiting him. But Siegmund will hear of no joy that would separate him from his love; rather than leave her he will die with her, and is on the point of piercing her unconscious bosom with his sword, when the Valkyrie, moved by the ardour of his love, promises him the victory even against the will of All-father. The ensuing battle-scene is conceived in the grandest dramatic spirit. Siegmund and Hunding rush towards each other on the height of a steep mountain nearly covered by dark thunder-clouds. In the intervals of the storm, Sieglinde's tremulous voice is heard calling for her lover. At last the two warriors meet, and Siegmund, encouraged by Brynhild's voice, is lifting his arm for a deadly stroke, when in a flash of lightning Wotan is discovered standing over Hunding, and protecting him with the spear into which the laws of the universe are cut in eternal runes. Siegmund's sword breaks on the outstretched spear, and Hunding pierces his defenceless breast—but not to enjoy his victory; for he also sinks dead to the ground before the contemptuous wave of Wotan's hand, to bring to Fricka the message of her triumph. Brynhild has lifted

Sieglinde on her horse, and disappears with her amongst the clouds. But the wrath of the disobeyed god pursues her.

In vain she spurs her horse, Grane, to the utmost speed; in vain she implores the protection of her sister-Valkyries. Wotan's voice is heard nearer and nearer, nothing can shield her from his revenge. At last she resolves to save only the helpless woman under her protection. She shows Sieglinde the way to a dense forest, there to seek shelter, and giving her the pieces of Siegmund's sword, she bids her keep them for the child in her bosom; after which she stands firmly, though tremblingly, abiding her fate. Wotan's fury is at first boundless. He threatens to bind Brynhild in magic slumber, and lay her by the wayside unprotected, and bare of her godhood, to become the slave of the first comer. But when the maid sinks at his feet imploring his forgiveness, and appealing to the voice in his own bosom which spoke for Siegmund, the god's wrath begins to subside. He cannot revoke his sentence, but he can and will protect his favourite child from dishonour. As he closes Brynhild's eyes with his kiss, he describes with his spear a circle round the rock where they stand, and at his summons Loge, returned to his primary form, shoots up in a mighty wall of flickering flame surrounding the bed of the sleeping maiden. Only he who dares to stride through

the fire, only the best and bravest, shall possess Brynhild. Wotan's leave-taking of the Valkyrie and the breaking forth of the flames are illustrated musically by one of those marvellous effects of graphically decorative writing which prove Wagner's vocation as a dramatic composer quite as clearly as the higher strains of his tender or passionate imaginings.

The third drama of the tetralogy, "Siegfried," was the second in order of conception. In it Wagner was chiefly attracted by the charm of a character developed in immediate contact with Nature; being, indeed, one with Nature, and therefore, like it, fresh and ever new in its impulsive *naiveté*. This character is that of Siegfried, the hero of the two last dramas of our cycle. His mother, Sieglinde, on her flight from Wotan's wrath, has been met by Mime, the Niblung, who, by his brother Alberich's command, lives in a wild forest to watch Fafner and his ill-gotten treasure. The latter, by power of the ring, has taken the shape of an enormous worm or dragon. Mime recognises the pieces of the sword, and knowing the miraculous powers of the babe to be born of Sieglinde, gives her shelter, in the hope of recovering the treasure by means of her son. Sieglinde dies at the birth of her child, and Siegfried grows up with Mime, trying in vain to conquer his aversion to the ugly dwarf, whose affection he in-

stinctively feels to be assumed. Much has Mime to suffer from the youthful freaks of his unmanageable pupil. In the opening scene of the drama we see him frightened almost to death by a young bear which Siegfried has caught in the wood and calmly introduces into the dwarf's smithy. In vain also Mime tries to weld a weapon adapted to Siegfried's impetuous strength; numberless swords the youth has smashed at first handling. At last, Mime is compelled to show Siegfried the pieces of his father's sword, and to tell him the sad tale of his mother's death, which we have anticipated in the above. Siegfried, delighted to hear that the ugly dwarf is not his father, at once resolves to leave him; his own sword he fashions from the pieces of Siegmund's weapon, and to test its strength beats it on the anvil, which he cuts in two. In order to prevent him from setting out on his journey at once, Mime reminds Siegfried of his inexperience in worldly matters; he does not even know what fear is; perhaps Fafner, the dragon, may teach him. Siegfried, curious to know what Mime's meaning can be, at once resolves to seek the dragon's lair, and both leave the hut together: not, however, before the treacherous dwarf has brewed a poisonous drink, to get rid of Siegfried as soon as he has killed the dragon. The story of one going out to learn what it is to be afraid occurs frequently in German

popular tradition from the Edda down to the fairy-tale collections of the present day.

The killing of the dragon itself is represented in strict accordance with the old story; but the scene immediately preceding it is entirely of Wagner's invention. It shows Siegfried sitting alone in the wood, musing over his friendless existence, and thinking of his mother, whom he has never seen; listening at the same time to the song of a wild bird, and in vain trying to imitate its note on a reed. The whole forms an idyllic episode of the sweetest charm; and the mysterious life and whirr of the forest on a summer's day has been rendered by Wagner in an orchestral piece of almost symphonic import and replete with romantic emotion.

After having killed the dragon, Siegfried accidentally tastes of its blood, and at once understands the language of the birds, who tell him of the ring and the Tarn-helmet, also of Mime's intended treachery. In sudden disgust he kills the venomous creature, and throws his corpse, together with that of the dragon, into the latter's cave. Thus Alberich's curse has once more proved fatal to the owner of the ring.[1] Unconscious of the danger incurred by his

[1] For want of space I have had to omit several scenes, in one of which Wotan, as the Wanderer, enters into a contest of "questions and answers" with Mime. Each is allowed to ask three questions, which, if the other fail to answer, his head is at the mercy of the

new possession, Siegfried follows the voice of another bird, which sweetly sings of the maiden sleeping on a rock surrounded by flames.

The third act introduces us again and for the last time to Wotan. The hero of his choice, born from his own blood and inspired by his divine will, yet not acting by his command, has taken the ring from the powers of evil. Henceforth light and law and order, represented by the upper gods, are no longer threatened by darkness and chaos. Yet Wotan feels that this order itself has been superseded by a new impulse, viz., the free action of human volition, we might almost say genius. The god has grown old; he knows that his end, "the dusk of the gods," is approaching, and willingly he resigns the earth and its joys to youth and spontaneity unimpaired by the shackles of traditional law. In this voluntary act of resignation lies the catharsis, the expiation of Wotan; yet when he meets Siegfried on his way to Brynhild's rock, and the young hero, impatient of delay, treats the unknown stranger's advice with scorn, the old pride once more is roused in his bosom, and threatening he holds up his spear; but Siegfried, drawing his sword, cuts the holy weapon in pieces. The runes incised on it have lost their power, the old

querist. The dwarf loses the game, but is respited by the god to find his doom at Siegfried's hands. The whole scene breathes the quaint shrewdness of some of the Eddic poems.

order of the world is broken, and Wotan disappears for ever from the scene to prepare for his final doom. The remainder of the drama is taken up by Siegfried's ride through the fire and his awakening of the spell-bound Brynhild. The ensuing love-duet equals in grandeur that in the "Valkyrie," which it surpasses in pure joy and tenderness of emotion. In Siegfried's arms Brynhild forgets Walhall and its splendour; the divinely impassible shield-maiden has been transformed into a loving woman.

Thus Siegfried dwells with Brynhild in her rocky fastness. She teaches his inexperienced youth the wisdom of her runic lore—an important feature of the Germanic myth, which endows woman with the gifts of superior knowledge and of prophecy. On leaving Brynhild in search of new adventures, Siegfried gives her the ring of the Niblung as a pledge of his faith.

The "Dusk of the Gods," the last drama of the trilogy, shows us Siegfried at the court of Gunther, a mighty king, who lives in splendour in his high hall by the Rhine, with his sister Gutrune and his half-brother Hagen. The latter is Alberich the Niblung's son, and the purpose of his sojourn amongst men is to regain for his father the possession of the fatal ring. By his advice a magic potion has been given to Siegfried, which makes him forget his troth plighted to Brynhild, and deeply enamours

him with the maidenly charms of Gutrune. To obtain her hand he promises Gunther to gain for him possession of Brynhild, whose very name has been erased from his memory by the powerful philter. Assuming Gunther's form by the power of his Tarnhelmet he returns to Brynhild's rock, and compels her by the force of his arm to share his couch with him; but a drawn sword placed between them separates Siegfried from her who is sacred to him as his friend Gunther's wife. The next morning Siegfried hastens back to his beloved Gutrune, followed more slowly by Gunther and his despairing bride.

On her arrival Brynhild is met by Gutrune and Siegfried in his own form; and recognising on his finger the fatal ring, which the hero has taken from her in their struggle, she at once concludes who has been her real conqueror. Vowing revenge, she accepts Hagen's offer to kill her beloved foe, Gunther, persuaded by Brynhild of Siegfried's breach of trust, weakly acquiescing in the murder of his friend.

The death of Siegfried is treated in accordance with the German "Niblungenlied." Tired from hunting, Siegfried, with Hagen, Gunther, and their followers, sits by a well in the forest. By their demand he tells the knights the adventures of his past life. As his story approaches his first meeting with Brynhild, old memories seem to rise before his

mind. They grow more vivid with every new incident he relates, and the moment he mentions the name of his love, the veil is torn asunder, and the consciousness of his deed and loss stands before his eyes. But this moment is to be his last. Hagen thrusts his spear into Siegfried's back, who sinks down and dies with Brynhild's name on his lips. His bleeding corpse is carried to the feet of his unsuspecting wife. Thus the glorious hero has fallen a victim to the curse of the gold. But his death breaks the fatal spell; his redeeming blood has freed gods and men from Alberich's power.

In the grand final scene Brynhild asserts her right to the dead hand of him whose love, though passingly estranged by treacherous witchcraft, in reality remained hers. Him she will join in his fiery grave. A pile has been heaped, on which Siegfried's corpse is lying. Brynhild, mounting her horse and kindling the pyre with a torch, rushes into the midst of the flame. The ring from Siegfried's finger she restores to the Rhine Daughters, who approach on the rising waves of the river. Hagen vainly attempts to lay hold of the ring, and is swept away into the depths of the stream. A bright gleam on the horizon announces at the same time the flaming destruction of Walhall and its divine inmates. Or shall we see in it the dawn of a new day after the "dusk of the gods"? It is

true that the Æsir and the law represented by them perish, but the powers of darkness also are baffled. The curse of the gold is broken by its return to the waves of the Rhine, and a new reign has begun, the reign of free human impulse, no more alloyed by the thirst of gold or shackled by the fear of conventional order. And here again we meet with the idea of the world-redeeming power of a woman's self-sacrificing love, so frequently found in Wagner's dramatic conceptions. For it is Brynhild's voluntary death which finally breaks the fetters of mankind, and ushers in the era of freedom and beautiful human development.

In a note to a cancelled version of Brynhild's death-song, Wagner adds that a considerable part of it has been omitted by him owing to its being more fully expressed by the accompanying music. It is indeed the music which throughout the drama will alone be able to explain what seems dark and to combine the motives of the action to dramatic unity. If this is the case with Wagner's poetry, how much more so with my meagre sketch of a story so deep in its sources and so variegated in its characterisation. For stated reasons, I have had to refrain from even attempting a closer analysis of Wagner's musical conceptions. Instead of this, I will try to convey to the reader a general idea of the manner in which Wagner makes his music the necessary

and inseparable complement of his poetic purpose. It must first of all be understood that our composer does not write what may best be described as "absolute music,"—music that is invented for the sake of sonorous beauty and developed with a view to showing this sounding faculty to greatest advantage. In Wagner sound is subordinate to meaning, musical rule to poetical impulse. Every melody occurring in his work (and the essence of his, as of all good music, is nothing but melody) has its function in the drama; it represents a certain idea or principle in this drama; and wherever this idea becomes the motive of the action, its corresponding melodious or harmonious combination resounds either in the vocal or orchestral part. Representative melodies of this kind, the introduction of which the art owes to Wagner, are of incalculable importance for the dramatic expressiveness of music. In the Niblungen trilogy the continuity of motive throughout the different dramas is expressed by this means in a manner wholly unattainable by words only. Take, for instance, the ardent desire of wealth and power in the minds of gods and men. Wagner has found a musical equivalent for it, expressive at once of its tempting charm and of the danger hidden under its surface. This melody, which first occurs in the "Rhinegold," continually reappears in the course of the trilogy wherever

the potent spell of the gold comes into action. In this manner a few chords of the orchestra are able to indicate a *nuance* of motive which it would take pages of writing to explain in words. Frequently also the modification of leading sentiments, or the simultaneous occurrence of two different impulses, gives rise to "thematic" or contrapuntal developments, such as prove Wagner's absolute mastery over all the technical resources of music. But never do these technicalities obtain undue importance. They always are made subservient to the economy of the drama, the fullest and highest conception of which remains the ultimate aim of Wagner's art. It is thus that in his work we are struck by a sense of perfect congruity between the combined efforts of two arts, which before him seemed to be divided by a deep chasm, and which only the rarest gift of both musical and poetical creativeness has been able to blend into one harmonious organism.

I.

THE WAGNER FESTIVAL.

(From the *Examiner*, August 19, 1876.)

BAIREUTH, *August* 14.

IT is said that Wagner, for his "work of art of the future," demands the co-operation of all the sister arts; but architecture on the present occasion has been of little assistance to him. Externally, at least, his theatre is anything but imposing, and the harmony of the design is somewhat impaired by the enormous elevations of the back of the building, required, it is said, for the complicated machinery of the stage. But this unfavourable impression changes as soon as one enters the house. The auditorium is arranged in the manner of the Greek *Koilon;* rows of steps rise amphitheatrically, and from every seat in the house a full view of the stage may be obtained. Side-boxes have been entirely dispensed with, a "Fürstenloge" at the back only being retained for the Emperors of Germany and Brazil, and numerous minor potentates who have honoured the performance with their illustrious

presence, and thrown this quiet little country town into a fever of excitement. The King of Bavaria, by the way, Wagner's protector and friend, is conspicuous by his absence. He came to hear the last rehearsal, and left immediately afterwards, avoiding, it is said, the presence of his imperial overlord. Political complications, you perceive, are not altogether absent from this artistic gathering. The many men and women of artistic and social distinction who make up this gathering it would be impossible to enumerate; the name alone of Franz Liszt, the celebrated composer and pianist, and Wagner's truest friend, may be mentioned. The Anglo-Saxon element is represented by numerous Wagnerites from both shores of the Atlantic, and sedentary Germans look with astonishment on strangers who have travelled thousands of miles by land and sea to enjoy a four days' musical treat. They cannot appreciate the additional sufferings which the cookery and the smells of this unsophisticated place entail on English digestions and nostrils. But who can think of drains and diet when every evening lifts him into the purest atmosphere of artistic beauty?

The representation of Wagner's tetralogy considered merely as a piece of theatrical art, is simply unique. A number of rehearsals under the composer's own direction have secured a perfection of ensemble never before witnessed except perhaps at the

Théâtre Français. But besides attaining this perfect co-operation of the single artists, Wagner has succeeded in inspiring one and all of them with the grandeur and intensity of his work. They are lifted above their own sphere of feeling by a sort of spiritual *rapport* with the composer, who, although he has given up his position at the conductor's desk to his pupil, Hans Richter, remains the intellectual leader of the whole. This wonderful unity of purpose in the whole performance, which is far different from the mere correctness of a musical ensemble, will, I have no doubt, be felt and acknowledged by the most hostile of English critics. These gentlemen may point out minor deficiencies if they like. Wagner cannot work miracles; he has himself waged war against the radical faults of the German style of singing, which he could not be supposed to remove in the course of a few months; neither was he able to restore his voice to that magnificent dramatic tenor, Herr Niemann, who took the part of Siegmund in the "Valkyrie." But such drawbacks, attaching to every human enterprise, cannot impair the magnificent impression of the whole.

I now must try to give your readers some general idea of the "Ring of the Niblung," as well as the limits of space and time will let me. The subject of the drama, or series of dramas, is derived from the oldest sources of Teutonic folklore preserved

in the sagas of Iceland, such as the two Eddas and the Volsunga Saga, the latter of which has been Englished by Messrs. Morris and Magnusson in a masterly way. Wagner has justly preferred these older tales to the medieval German version of the same subject contained in the "Niblungenlied." Of invention proper there is little in Wagner's design, but he has succeeded in connecting with each other and giving psychological and dramatic vitality to the frequently disjointed and half-understood suggestions of the old popular stories. The first or introductory drama of the tetralogy, which was performed on Sunday evening, is called the "Rhinegold." It has been compared to the "Prologue in Heaven" of Göethe's "Faust," foreshadowing in the minds of divine beings the human actions of the ensuing piece. But, unlike the "Lord" in Goethe's drama, Wagner's gods are not impassive lookers-on, but themselves the actors and sufferers in the great drama which ends with their doom. The subject of the trilogy is the struggle of free love and human impulse against the fetters of conventional laws and against the sway of wealth and splendour. In the introductory piece, the gold, the symbol of the world's dominion, is hidden in the depth of the Rhine, watched by the naiads of the river, elementary beings who enjoy the gleam of the metal unconscious of its dangerous power. The opening scene

shows the bottom of the great stream with the three Rhine Daughters floating amongst the rocks in merry gambols. Wagner's music here is graceful and light, like the murmuring waves; from an orchestral undercurrent the song of the water-maidens rises in melodious strains. Soon Alberich, king of the Niblungs, a mischievous dwarf, appears on the scene, who, ascending from his subterraneous realm, begins to make love to the maidens. The girls pretend to yield to his desire, but always escape from the embrace of the gnome.

Their mock tenderness is rendered by Wagner in melodies of Italian beauty, the slightly exaggerated sweetness of which forebodes the disappointment of the amorous dwarf. Suddenly a glow breaks through the waves, brightening their sombre hues as with a tinge of fire. It is the gleam of the hidden gold. On his inquiring, the heedless girls tell Alberich the secret of the treasure. From him they believe it to be safe, for only he can possess the gold who for ever renounces the joys of love; a hopeless case, the girls playfully add, for their fervent admirer. But Alberich, struck with the hope of boundless power, utters the fatal curse to love's pleasure, and, before the girls can prevent it, disappears with the gold. Utter darkness envelops the stage; the wailing cries of the Rhine Daughters alone are heard in the distance. The scenic representation of the events

just alluded to is admirably contrived, especially the floating movements of the girls. The "awakening of the gold" also was of magic effect.

The next scene, not divided from the first by dropping of the curtain, shows Wotan, the supreme god of Northern mythology, asleep in a flowery meadow with Fricka, the Teutonic equivalent of Juno. A splendid castle, Walhall, built for him by the giants, is seen in the distance. Here we meet for the first time with a beautiful melody, the solemn notes of which signify the splendour of the gods. It is used throughout the trilogy as a representative theme or "leading motive," the significance of which, in Wagner's music, has been frequently pointed out. In the ensuing dialogue between Wotan and his wife, we hear that Freia, the goddess of youth, has been given as security to the giants who built Walhall; unless ransom can be found, the goddess will become the slave of the monsters. Loge, the god of fire, and the Mephistopheles of Icelandic folklore, has advised Wotan's bargain with the giants, and to him the gods now look for the means of rescuing Freia. A long dispute ensues between the gods on the one, and the uncouth workmen on the other side, the latter at last consenting to take, instead of Freia, the gold robbed by Alberich, the power of which has been described to them by Loge. To recover the treasure from the Niblung,

Wotan and Loge descend to the domain of Alberich, who in the meantime has fashioned the gold into a mystic ring and a helmet by means of which he can take the form of any living thing. By the same power he has conquered the other Niblungs or dwarfs, over whom he rules with an iron hand, his own brother, Mime, being amongst his victims. The grotesque sufferings of the latter give rise to much broad humour. By acting on his vanity the gods succeed in depriving Alberich of his treasure, but he attaches his curse to the ring and all its future possessors. Wotan himself covets the possession of the ring, but is at last compelled to add it to the remainder of the treasure, which the giants accept as ransom for Freia. The appearance of Ertha, the old pantheistic symbol of the universe, alone is able to counteract the thirst of gold in the god's bosom. A splendid scene, in which the gods enter Walhall by a rainbow, which Froh, the god of light, has thrown across the valley of the Rhine, concludes the introductory drama.

My bald sketch will give the reader but an imperfect idea of the great and varied beauties of the piece. Amongst scenic effects, the descent of the gods into Alberich's realm ought particularly to be mentioned. Musically speaking, Loge's description of the power of the gold is perhaps the most remarkable passage. It was rendered most admirably by

Herr Vogel, an actor and singer of whom any country might be proud. The public throughout refrained from applause during the piece, but after his speech an involuntary burst of admiration could not be avoided. The rendering of Alberich by Herr Hill, and that of his brother Mime, the grotesque character in the play, by Herr Schlosser, are also deserving of high praise. Herr Betz, one of the most celebrated singers of the German stage, has taken the difficult part of Wotan, which he renders with much dignity and pathos. The representatives of Ertha and of the two goddesses were less remarkable; but the three Rhine Daughters, Mlles. Lilli Lehmann, Marie Lehmann, and Lammert, did full justice to the graceful music allotted to them. The orchestra throughout was admirable, and the effect of sound was greatly increased by its rising in one compact column of air from the lower part of the house, where the musicians were seated, invisible to the audience. How much the illusion gains by the removal from sight of a gesticulating conductor and his hard-working orchestra need not be pointed out. In addition to this, the auditorium itself is all but dark during the performance. Ladies cannot admire each other's dresses, pedants are prevented from reading the score: the attention of the audience must be directed towards the stage, the only point of light in the surrounding darkness. The whole impression

is as different from that received in an ordinary theatre as can well be imagined. Wagner has boldly ventured on an entirely new course of dramatic representation; and to judge by the enthusiastic applause of an audience by no means consisting of Wagnerites exclusively, his success has been complete.

Of the remaining three pieces of the tetralogy, the "Valkyrie," "Siegfried," and the "Dusk of the Gods," I must speak in my next letter.

II.

THE WAGNER FESTIVAL.

(From the *Examiner*, August 26, 1876.)

BAIREUTH, *August* 17.

A NUMBER of years are supposed to have elapsed between the "Rhinegold" and the "Valkyrie." Wotan has coveted the gold, and thus become subject to the curse attaching to it. He feels that his doom is approaching; his power is lost if Alberich, the representative of the powers of darkness and chaos, regains possession of the ring. This idea of a final destruction of the gods by their own guilt is a striking feature of the old myths. It proves the deep-rooted feeling of moral responsibility in the consciousness of Teutonic nations. The gods of the Greeks sin, but no punishment awaits, no law restrains them; Wotan's power, on the contrary, is founded on law. His treaty with the giants prevents him from recovering the fatal ring by his own action. One hope only remains to secure it from Alberich's grasp: if a hero, god-inspired, but not guided by the gods, and regardless

of laws human or divine, could gain the ring, the powers of darkness would be baffled. The idea amounts to an apotheosis of free human impulse; it is the leading thought of the whole trilogy. To create such a hero Wotan has assumed the form and name of Volsung, a valorous man. To him a wife has borne twin children, Siegmund and his sister Sieglinde. By a wild life of adventure in the forest the god has prepared Siegmund for his great task. From his mother and sister the boy has been separated in earliest childhood.

The rising, or rather the parting, of the curtain—for such is the improved custom at the Baireuth Theatre—shows the hut of Sieglinde, the unwilling wife of Hunding. Siegmund enters in a state of exhaustion on his flight from an overpowering number of foes. Sieglinde refreshes him with water; neither knows the other. Soon Hunding arrives. He is found to be a friend of Siegmund's enemies, and challenges him to mortal combat in the morning. Siegmund is weaponless, but Sieglinde, in the silence of the night, returns to him, and shows him the hilt of a sword in the stem of the ash-tree round which the hut is built. A stranger, she tells him, on her wedding-day smote the blade into the tree trunk; nobody since has been able to move it. With a mighty wrench, Siegmund tears the weapon from the tree. It is "Nothung," the sword

which his father has promised him in his highest need. But soon warlike thoughts give way to tender feelings. The lovely night of the spring draws the hearts of the pair together. A magnificent love duet ensues, unequalled in melodious beauty and passion by anything known to me in music.

It was magnificently rendered by Herr Niemann and Mme. Schefzky, and the impression on the audience was overpowering. Niemann, as I said before, has lost his voice, but his acting and his enunciation of the words make one forget this deficiency of physical power. It has been said that the love of brother and sister, which is a vital ingredient of Wagner's story, and has been treated by him in the open and therefore chaste spirit of the old myth itself, would preclude the possibility of a production of the "Valkyrie" in England. But it should be remembered that we are not dealing here with ordinary men and women, but with the children of a god—mythical beings, that is, who have hardly yet emerged from the stage of natural forces. Who, in his senses, has ever been shocked at the amours of the Greek divinities on account of their being within the forbidden degrees of relationship, or at the intermarriages of the children of Adam and Eve, which the Pentateuch implies? The tragic guilt for which Sieglinde suffers does, therefore, consist less in the love for her brother than in the breach of her

marriage vow. It is on this ground that Fricka, the protectress of wedded rights, urges the punishment of the pair. Reluctantly Wotan is compelled to abandon Siegmund, his son and the hero of his choice, in his fight with Hunding. The god knows that his own doom is involved in Siegmund's fate, but he has to bow down to the established law, of which he himself is nothing but the representative. At this point a new important agency is introduced into the story. Brynhild, the Valkyrie, or sword-maiden, and Wotan's favourite daughter, is touched by the love and misery of the guilty pair, and vainly tries to avert their fate. In spite of Wotan's command she assists Siegmund against Hunding, and only by the personal interference of the god himself is the latter enabled to pierce the breast of his foe. This fight of the two warriors is conceived in the highest spirit of scenic art, and was of overpowering impression. Imagine Siegmund and Hunding rushing towards each other on the height of a mountain all but covered by thunderclouds. Sieglinde's tremulous voice is heard calling for her lover. A flash of lightning suddenly shows Wotan protecting Hunding with the spear on which the laws of the world are cut in eternal runes. The weirdness of the situation is beyond description; music, and poetry, and scenic art combine to produce an effect of astounding beauty and grandeur.

The third act of the "Valkyrie" contains a beautiful piece of concerted music, the chorus of the sword-maidens, admirably executed by the eight ladies who had generously taken these comparatively subordinate parts. The same scene, generally called the Valkyries' ride, tended to show the limit of possibility to which representation on the stage can go. Wagner's libretto describes the Valkyries on horseback carrying the bodies of dead warriors to Walhall, but the realisation of the scene by means of a *lanterna magica* fell far short of his magnificent conception. The remainder of the third act is chiefly taken up by the punishment of Brynhild's disobedience. When Siegmund falls, the Valkyrie lifts Sieglinde on her horse to hide her from the wrath of Wotan. She shows her the way to a deep forest, and giving her the pieces of Siegmund's shattered sword, bids her keep them for the child in her bosom, after which she stands firmly to abide her fate. Wotan at first threatens to bind Brynhild in magic slumber, and lay her by the wayside, the victim of the first comer. But soon the god's wrath begins to subside. His own heart was with Siegmund in the fight, and it was to save her father from his impending doom that Brynhild disobeyed his command. Wotan cannot revoke his sentence, but he will protect his child from dishonour. As he closes her eyes with a kiss, he describes with his spear a circle round the rock

on which the maiden lies, and immediately a wall of flickering flame surrounds her. None but he who dares to stride through the fire, none but a hero, shall possess Brynhild. The invocation scene, as it might be called, is a splendid piece of descriptive music, such as only Wagner has hitherto achieved. The acting and singing of Herr Betz as Wotan in this scene were replete with tenderness and pathos. Madame Materna, as Brynhild, is also worthy of the highest praise. She is an excellent actress, and her voice is fully equal to the almost superhuman task imposed upon it by Wagner. Next to Mademoiselle Titiens, she is undoubtedly the greatest tragic singer now on the boards.

The enthusiasm after the "Valkyrie" was, if possible, greater even than after its predecessor. Amongst the four works of the tetralogy it certainly is that which appeals most immediately to the feelings of the hearer. The plot is simple and touching, and the mythological matter less prominent than in "Rhinegold" or "Siegfried." There is indeed no reason why this work should not be performed in London; the manager of the Vienna Court Theatre has already accepted it for next season. Owing to the temporary hoarseness of Herr Betz there was a delay of one day after the performance of the "Valkyrie," the third opera, "Siegfried," being postponed till Wednesday. Most

dismal rumours were afloat as to the singer's total disablement—fully accounted for by the nature of his part, as anti-Wagnerites and other prophets of evil added, not without a feeling of triumph. To most of the audience, however, the interval after two days' excitement was anything but unwelcome.

"Siegfried," the third drama of the "Ring of the Niblung," is the apotheosis of youth. Everything in it is young and fresh, from the hero to the little bird of the forest, whose language becomes comprehensible to one brought up in immediate contact with Nature. To appreciate this work we must recall the early impressions of our childhood; we must once more listen to old fairy tales, to the "lispings of the nursery," as Mr. Lowe said on a memorable occasion. The argument of "Siegfried" must be summed up in the fewest words. Sieglinde, his mother, on her flight from Wotan, has come to the hut of Mime, who lives in a wild forest to watch Fafner and his treasure. By means of the ring the giant has taken the shape of an enormous dragon. Mime recognises the pieces of the sword, and knowing the miraculous powers of the babe to be born by Sieglinde, has given her shelter in the hope of recovering the treasure by means of her son. Sieglinde dies at the birth of her child, and Siegfried grows up with the dwarf, who in vain tries to gain his affection; the youth is instinctively repelled by his assumed

tenderness. Siegfried, as I said before, is emphatically young and unsophisticated. He is destined to do great things, but he does them with divine unconcernedness. From the pieces of his father's sword he welds a weapon for himself; with it he slays Fafner the worm, and becomes possessor of the fatal treasure. Drinking accidentally of the blood of the dragon, he receives the language of the animals of the forest, and a wood-bird tells him of a beautiful woman lying asleep on a rock surrounded by fire. Siegfried's dormant desire is roused, but before he ascends the rock he is met by Wotan in the disguise of a wanderer. The god feels that his end is at hand; his law and will are superseded by a new impulse, that of free human action, one might almost say genius. Siegfried, the representative of this new principle, severs with a cut of his sword the holy spear of Wotan. The runes incised in it have henceforth lost their power. The hero then rushes through the fire and awakens Brynhild with a kiss. A splendid love-duet between the two brings the drama to a close. "Siegfried" contains some of the finest musical passages, and at the same time some of the most daring ventures, that are to be found in Wagner's work. Siegfried's song, when he fashions the sword, is tuneful and popular in the best sense of the word. The grotesque character of Mime is sustained throughout with graphic distinctness, and

a kind of orchestral interlude descriptive of the mysterious life and whirr of the forest on a summer's day is of sweetest idyllic charm. But a full realisation of Wagner's dramatic and mythical purpose is required to preserve Siegfried's fight with the dragon —an enormous creature, manufactured in London, and working admirably—from a slight tinge of the comic. A dying song of the monster, of prophetic import, may cause amusement amongst people who are unaware that "clairvoyance" in the moment of death is a common feature in old Teutonic folklore. Of three of the chief performers in "Siegfried" I have already spoken. Madame Materna (Brynhild), Herren Betz (Wotan) and Schlosser (Mime), sustained their difficult parts admirably. Siegfried, the hero of the piece, was represented by Herr Unger, a young inexperienced singer with a powerful voice and a truly heroic appearance. His vocal training and his mimetic action, however, left much to be desired. The dearth of heroic tenors in all countries was again illustrated by Wagner's choice. Herr Unger's impersonation, however, was not without good points. He had evidently studied his part with the utmost zeal, and his scene with Mime in the first act was upon the whole excellent. But towards the end, especially in the love-duet with Brynhild, his physical and mental energies seemed to flag.

The dramas of Wagner's tetralogy might be com-

pared to the four movements of a symphony. "Rhine-gold" is the bright and brilliant opening allegro, the "Valkyrie" the tender adagio, "Siegfried" an impetuous scherzo, and the "Dusk of the Gods" (*Gotterdämmerung*) a grand finale, full of tragic darkness, but not without a gleam of hope at the end. The last-mentioned work is preceded by two introductory scenes, one of which, the leave-taking of Brynhild and Siegfried, is a musical conception of grandest import. The hero has dwelt with the Valkyrie in her rocky fastness. She has taught his inexperienced youth the wisdom of her runes; her love has developed him; from an impetuous boy he has become a self-conscious man. Such is the high idea of woman's mission in the old Teutonic myths. On leaving Brynhild in search of new adventures he gives her the "ring of the Niblung" as a pledge of his faith. We next see him at the court of Gunther, a mighty king on the Rhine. A love-philter given to him makes Siegfried forget Brynhild and enamours him with Gunther's sister, Gutrune, an innocent but somewhat insignificant maiden. The magic potion has been administered by the advice of Hagen, Gunther's half-brother and son of Alberich the Niblung, for whom he wishes to regain possession of the ring. To obtain Gutrune's hand, Siegfried promises Gunther to gain for him possession of Bryn-hild, whose very name has been erased from his

memory by the potent charm. This he achieves by assuming Gunther's form, the metamorphosis being effected by means of the magic helmet (*tarnkappe*) from Alberich's treasure. When Brynhild meets Siegfried in his own form, she upbraids him with his faithlessness, which the unconscious hero denies. At the same time she recognises on his finger the fatal ring, which in their struggle Siegfried had taken from her, and at once concludes who has been her real conqueror. Hagen offers to kill Siegfried, and Gunther, persuaded by Brynhild of Siegfried's breach of trust, assents to the murder of his friend. Siegfried's death is treated in accordance with the "Niblungenlied." Tired from hunting, the knights rest in the forest, and Siegfried tells them the story of his adventures. Gradually old memories rise before him. As his tale approaches his first meeting with the Valkyrie, the veil is torn asunder, and when Hagen thrusts his spear into Siegfried's back the hero's last thought is Brynhild. Thus another victim to the gold has fallen, but it is the last. In the final scene Brynhild asserts her right to the dead hand of him who, although estranged from her by witchcraft, in reality remained her own. A pile has been heaped on which Siegfried's body is lying. Brynhild mounts her horse, and, kindling the pyre, rides into the midst of the flames. (Such is the description in the libretto, but it need hardly be

said that Madame Materna did not fully comply with the composer's demand. She led her horse towards the conflagration, by no means an easy task.) The ring she restores to the Rhine Daughters, who approach on the rising waves of the river. Through the clouds are seen the gods surrounded by flames; for the same fire which consumes Brynhild and Siegfried, the representatives of the new idea, also becomes the grave of the old world of the gods. But Alberich, and with him the powers of darkness, also are baffled; for the gold is restored to the Rhine Daughters and its curse broken.

The whole idea of Wagner's tetralogy might be summed up in the axiom that in certain emergencies of human progress established laws and forms prove absolutely inadequate, and must be superseded by the unencumbered impulse of the individual. Mr. Carlyle's "hero" is in the main the result of the same strain of reasoning. But in Wagner, heroic impulse is inseparable from the longing for beauty and its human typification—woman. In his work, indeed, woman herself ultimately becomes the redeemer of the world; for it is Brynhild who, by her voluntary death, breaks the curse of the gold and ushers in a new era of freedom and beautiful human development. The most striking musical feature of the "Dusk of the Gods" is the comparative frequency of concerted pieces. A powerful

male chorus is introduced, and we meet again with joy our old favourites, the Rhine Daughters, and their harmonious songs. The chief performers, Herr Unger (Siegfried) and Madame Materna (Brynhild) have already been touched upon. The dimensions of the work make any attempt at condensed analysis appear hopeless.

At the end of the last piece, Wagner, against his published intention, was compelled to appear before the curtain, and addressed a few words to the audience. Alluding to the self-sacrificing enthusiasm of the performers, he said that the existence of a national and ideal art in Germany was henceforth an established fact; "but it is your task," he added, alluding to the public in general, "to show that you desire to have such an art." These may seem proud words, but they fully express the significance of the event. A great work has been performed in a manner unique, perhaps, in the annals of music. Artistic purpose, to the exclusion of all other considerations, has been the guiding principle of composer, of performers, of scene-painters. An effect has been produced unattainable — nay, unapproachable — at an ordinary performance. Shall this event remain a solitary point of brightness in the dusk of theatrical routine, or shall its influence grow and broaden and bear lasting fruit? To answer that question lies, as Wagner says, with the public.

THREE FRENCH OPERAS.

I.

CARMEN.[1]

(From the *Times*, July 20, 1878.)

THE late M. Bizet's new opera, the great success of which at Her Majesty's Theatre has been duly recorded, is so important a work of art that a closer analysis of the music than could find room in our current accounts of the opera seems well warranted. A careful study of the pianoforte score more than confirms the favourable opinion derived from the general impression of the performance, and reveals details of admirable workmanship which are apt to escape even the attentive listener. To draw the reader's notice to these no less than to the general structure of the work—as far as is possible without the aid of musical type—is our present purpose. But be it stated first that the vocal score,

[1] Carmen. Opéra en quatre actes. Poëme de H. Meilhac et L. Halévi. Musique de Georges Bizet. Partition chant et piano arrangée par l'auteur. London: Metzler & Co. Paris: Choudens.

with pianoforte accompaniment arranged by the composer, is in all respects excellent.

M. Bizet prefaces his opera by a short orchestral introduction for which overture would be too dignified a name. It is founded on, or rather is a literal transcription of, the festive music announcing the bull-fight in the fourth act, including the short phrase in F sharp minor assigned to the children's chorus, which pleasantly relieves the hammering rhythm of the opening theme in A major, also the song in march rhythm of Escamillo the toreador, whom the reader may be supposed to know from the full account of the libretto previously published in the *Times*. This festive noise is followed by a short movement, *andante moderato*, which introduces, at first in D minor, but changing abruptly from key to key, a striking theme consisting of two bars only. It is of particular importance that the audience should remember this theme, and of that M. Bizet has taken excellent care by introducing into it so unusual an interval as the superfluous second. It has been said with some truth that the entire opera of "Lohengrin" is based upon the change of the A major chord to that of F sharp minor. In a similar sense it might be stated that "Carmen" is little more than the development of the idea represented by this theme.

And this leads us to add a few words as to the

relation of the two composers, of which so much has been said by French and English critics. That Bizet is considerably influenced by the German master's style a superficial glance at the score of "Carmen" would be sufficient to show. We are not so much alluding to the orchestration, with which we are not at present concerned, nor to the freedom with which the forms of absolute music are handled, nor yet to such external peculiarities as the declamatory treatment of the voice parts, or the predilection for chromatic progressions of the harmony. A tendency towards these is found in almost every composer of the modern schools of Italy and France as well as of Germany, and cannot be attributed to one master alone. But the case is different with an entirely new means of dramatic characterisation, the systematic development, if not the first idea, of which is, no doubt, due to Wagner. We are speaking of what Wagner's disciples describe as the "Leitmotiv," or representative theme—a word which in English musical terminology is sometimes rendered by "leading motive." Its principle is the absolute identification of a character, or of the leading dramatic impulse of a character, with a particular musical phrase, which in consequence is introduced, either in the vocal part or still more frequently in the orchestral accompaniment, wherever that character or that impulse comes into prominent action.

Such a leading theme we have to discover in the phrase above alluded to, and the character with which it is immediately associated is that of the heroine herself. It is indeed admirably adapted for such a purpose. Carmen, the reader will remember, is a gipsy, and the interval of the superfluous second already referred to is peculiar to the popular tunes of that tribe, as it is, indeed, to many Eastern nations. In the Hungarian dances popularised by Brahms it plays a conspicuous part, and Rubinstein in his settings of Mirza Schaffy, the pseudo-Persian poet, has used it with admirable effect. But in addition to its national significance, the theme we are speaking of also conveys a graphic idea of the waywardness of Bizet's frail heroine, while, at the same time, its weird harmonic colouring seems to forebode some strange doom.

Of the truly masterly way in which this theme is turned to account throughout the opera we shall have to speak more than once. For the leading theme proper, of which this is a remarkable and at the same time the only instance in the opera, ought not to be mistaken the mere occasional reminiscence, of which also M. Bizet, in common with many other composers before and after Wagner, makes frequent and skilful use. A case in point will best illustrate the difference. When Michaela, José's faithful love, first makes her appearance among the soldiers, the

innocent charm of her nature is very happily indicated by a subdued phrase in the orchestra (p. 11). When in a subsequent scene Don José's comrades tell him of the girl who has been inquiring for him, they naturally recall to mind the impression previously received, and this psychological process is delicately indicated by a reference to the same phrase again assigned to the orchestra (pp. 26 and 31). But for that reason we are not expected to identify Michaela with the theme.

In his first scene M. Bizet introduces us at once *in medias res.* A lively theme of strongly marked rhythm indicates the noise and bustle of a Spanish street, upon which the soldiers, singing in chorus, look with much complacency. The entrance of Michaela gives rise to an expressive phrase, and leads somewhat abruptly from the key of B flat to that of A minor. A lively scene now ensues. The soldiers proffer gallantry, which Michaela, in quest of her José, refuses. But although virtuous, she is a woman and a Spaniard, and her reply shows nothing of the harshness of a prude. She even joins in a very pretty and graceful melody of march-like rhythm (pp. 12 and 16), which the soldiers intone, and which, after some miscellaneous discourse, leads back to the original theme and key. The next number, a "*coro di monelli,*" which might be roughly rendered by "chorus of ragamuffins," is one of those

pieces of which the musician has very little to say, but which frequently go far to make the success of an opera. A purist might object to the hackneyed tune and the coarse staccato of the rhythm, but the shouts of schoolboys at the sight of a company of soldiers are not usually of a very refined order. No sooner have the boys disappeared and the new soldiers—José amongst the number—mounted guard, than the sounds of a bell announce the closing of the neighbouring cigarette manufactory, and in due course the girls employed at that establishment make their appearance, and immediately commence a song in chorus, hardly less lively, although less boisterous, than that of the *monelli*. The fragrant weed they manipulate is the subject, and E natural, leading through enharmonic means to A flat, the key of their ditty, which, although of piquant rhythm, is not musically very striking. Soon afterwards Carmen arrives, duly announced by the "leading motive" already referred to, and greeted by a remarkably tender phrase of the tenors in F minor. She observes the unfortunate José, and being a gipsy as well as an operatic heroine, at once commences a song to captivate him. This song, which plays an important part in the opera, is called "Avanera," and may be, for all we know, of Cuban origin. Bizet, in adopting the tune, has at any rate fully made it his own by his characteristic accompaniment. Believers

in "absolute" melody, apart from harmony, will be surprised to find, on referring to the score, that the first part of this eminently melodious tune is essentially a chromatic scale, first on the basis of D minor, afterwards (when the chorus enters) on that of D major. In this respect it may, indeed, be called a triumph of harmonic and rhythmical devices. Sung as it is by Miss Hauk in the opera and by Madame Trebelli at concerts, this song cannot fail of its effect.

Don José finds it irresistible, as appears but too unmistakably from the feeble resistance he offers to the coquettish advances of Carmen, accompanied once more by the representative theme belonging to her. Fortunately Michaela appears with a message from José's mother to remind the soldier of his home and of his early attachment. This is done by means of a lengthy duet between the pair, and, curiously enough, M. Bizet, as if in his mind the ideas of virtue and musical correctness were inseparable, here approaches the orthodox forms of the opera more closely than has hitherto been the case. Of this duet little more need be said than that it is very effective, containing, among other things, a not very refined fortissimo passage for the two voices in unison (pp. 67 and 73), and that the harmonies throughout are more pleasing, although less interesting, than is common with Bizet. An involuntary

thought rising in José's mind of the bewitching gipsy is again delicately indicated by a reference to the theme so frequently mentioned.

The discourse of the lovers is interrupted by the noisy but dramatically very effective chorus which announces the quarrel of the girls and the outrage of Carmen, who enters immediately afterwards, humming a graceful tune, the nature of which may best be indicated by the expressive Italian epithet "*cantarellando*" (p. 91). Being left in the charge of José, she immediately resumes her work of temptation by singing another song, this time a Seguedilla, again evidently founded on a popular air, and again treated by the composer with consummate skill. But, in spite of this, one of the chief defects of the opera becomes here apparent for the first time. It is the undue prevalence of the national or local over the purely human element. A heroine whose deepest emotion finds expression in a popular Spanish song cannot be said to fulfil the demands of high dramatic art. The fault, of course, is one of the librettists rather than of the musician. Carmen has little or no genuine feeling, and therefore offers no opportunity for the deeper resources of musical expression. She is changeable and whimsical, and irresistibly graceful, and all these epithets equally apply to M. Bizet's musical delineation of her character; but the want of elevated passion is none the less felt through-

out the work. The first act ends abruptly with the flight of Carmen, and we feel thankful to the composer for refraining from the ordinary choral finale, which, however attractive the music might have been, could not but impede the rapid progress of the dramatic action.

Having endeavoured to indicate, as far as mere words can indicate, the general character of M. Bizet's music, we must pass over the remaining portions of the work in a more cursory manner, pointing out such detached features as seem to be especially worthy of attention. The second act being, as the reader will remember, chiefly concerned with smugglers and other lawless persons, contains rather more gipsy music than is altogether desirable. Its very opening is a "*Canzone Boema*" (3–4 E minor), intoned by the incorrigible Carmen, two other damsels joining in the refrain. Here also we discover the significance of the march-tune in the overture, which is alternately taken up by Escamillo, the bullfighter, and his admiring audience (p. 135, *et passim*). Amongst the concerted music which ensues we notice particularly a graceful theme, to the sound of which Carmen and her companions boast of their wiles and arts in imposing upon ingenuous manhood (pp. 156 and 174). This melody we ought to bear in mind while listening to the duet between José and Carmen; for here the

composer, with true dramatic instinct, introduces a slight, but none the less unmistakable, allusion to the earlier theme at the very moment when Carmen allures her victim by promises of liberty and love (p. 201). The entire duet is a very able piece of workmanship, and the contrast between the wayward girl and her weak but truly impassioned lover is sustained throughout with remarkable consistency. The act closes with an elaborate finale founded on the theme from the duet, and working up to a brilliant climax, including a high C for the soprani.

In the third act our space will allow us to dwell upon one piece only, a trio, or, more properly, a solo alternating with a duet, assigned to Carmen and her two companions respectively. The latter consult the cards, and express their delight at the prospect of new lovers in a flowing but intentionally commonplace tune. When Carmen questions the same oracle, "Sudden and violent death" is the answer; and here again the contrast between the sombre tone of her reflections and the thoughtless merriment of the two girls is admirably rendered by the music.

The last act reintroduces the boisterously festive music known to us from the overture. Escamillo again appears on the scene, and his song is not wanting. While the applause of the crowd assembled in the circus is heard in the distance, tragic

issues are rapidly developing in the front of the stage, José implores Carmen not to withdraw her love from him, who has become an outcast and a criminal for her sake, and at last, maddened by jealousy, plunges his dagger into her heart. Here again the characters of the pair are admirably indicated by the music. The syncopations accompanying José's address seem to indicate the halting, wavering nature of the man (p. 357), while the energetic rhythms of Carmen's reply signify undauntable courage and decision. When at last the spectators return from the arena to find Carmen killed by her lover, the surprise in store for them is indicated with marvellous ingenuity by the sudden introduction of a D natural into the key of F sharp major, in which their festive chorus is written. It is by such means that the musician mingles terror with joy in a manner wholly unattainable by the poet. The final exclamation of José, "Carmen, mia Carmen adorata," marks a noble dramatic climax. It is preceded by the "leading motive" twice repeated fortissimo, the full significance of the melody being thus finally revealed.

To sum up, it is undeniable that "Carmen," with all its defects, is a work of very high musical and dramatic gift, and of perhaps still higher promise—a promise unfortunately frustrated by the composer's untimely death. Bizet has been charged with treating a tragic subject in the style of opéra-bouffe, but

the reader who has followed our remarks will at once perceive the futility of such an accusation. For it is exactly in the subtle indications of an impending doom which accompany all the apparent brightness and lightness of his music that M. Bizet's dramatic power appears most unmistakably.

THREE FRENCH OPERAS.

II.

POLYEUCTE.[1]

(From the *Times*, November 7, 1878.)

MONSIEUR GOUNOD'S new opera, which is shedding its lustre over the closing days of the Exhibition, is not, properly speaking, a work of recent origin. It was commenced several years ago, and its production had been planned more than once. The hackneyed epithet "long expected" may, indeed, be justly applied to the first performance at the Grand Opera, which was given with great *éclat* on the 7th of October, and was duly recorded in the *Times*. As to the effect produced by the performance, accounts in French, English, and German papers differ between the extremes of a genuine and lasting impression and a mere noisy *succès d'estime*, more or less accounted for by the gorgeousness of the scenery. As to the

[1] Polyeucte. Opéra en cinq actes, Paroles de Jules Barbier et Michel Carré; Musique de Gounod. Partition piano et chant réduite par H. Salomon. Paris, Henry Lemoine.

beauty and splendour of this, all judges seem to agree, and *Le Figaro* especially goes into raptures over antique costumes, triumphal arches, and Sévère's quadriga drawn by four white horses borrowed from the "Administration des Pompes Funèbres." For, *Le Figaro* adds, in a fine vein of moral philosophy, "Le cheval ne s'émeut guère de ces brusques transitions dont sa vie est pleine." With these paraphernalia of operatic splendour we have not to deal on the present occasion. We are concerned with the music alone, and with the music in its naked, unadorned state. Not even the effects of orchestration—the equivalent of colour in the musician's art—can be more than guessed at from the pianoforte score before us. Here the most elemental, and, it may be added, the most important, qualities of musical genius—melodious invention and harmonic and contrapuntal treatment—stand out in bare outline and can be judged on their unaided merits. Trying, and in a certain sense unfair, though such a test may be to a composer, it is, perhaps, more adapted to determine the ultimate value of his work than the hurried impressions of a first night. But before speaking of "Polyeucte," we must say a few recapitulatory words of its illustrious composer and of the position the new work is likely to occupy in the history of his career. This can be done with the greater certainty as that career itself may

to some degree be considered complete; for M. Gounod, having been born in 1818, is past the age when artists strike out entirely new paths. Moreover, he has essayed almost every form of instrumental and vocal composition, and there is little difference of opinion as to where his power and where his weakness lies.

M. Gounod, his most ardent admirers must admit, has not created a style of his own in the sense that Gluck, or Weber, or Auber has. He is essentially an eclectic musician—an artist, that is, of a highly cultivated mind, who has studied the different schools of music and adopted from each such means of expression as are sympathetic to him or suitable to a particular purpose. In consequence, his works present a mixture of various styles, and it may broadly be said that they come the nearer the composer's own standard of perfection the more numerous and variegated the elements are which he knows so well how to blend and amalgamate with each other. It is, no doubt, for the same reason that M. Gounod generally succeeds best with what may be described as "mixed" subjects. He has attempted to realise dramatically both the pagan and the monotheistic ideas in their purity. But neither "Sappho," his earliest dramatic attempt, produced under the auspices of Madame Viardot Garcia in 1851, nor his Biblical opera, "La Reine de Sabba"

("Irene" in the English version), was among his prominent successes. "Faust," on the other hand, Gounod's undisputed masterpiece, and one of which the French School, or indeed any school, might be justly proud, contains the elements of Classic beauty on the one, and of Romantic mysticism on the other hand, together with that feeling of religious fervour which is prominent in many of the composer's works, and which, according to his own statement, has inspired him with the music to Corneille's "Polyeucte." We say Corneille's, for the great dramatist's work has in all essential points become the basis of M. Gounod's opera, as it was that of Donizetti's "Poliuto" or "I Martiri." It is true that MM. Barbier and Michel Carré have taken some liberties with the classical tragedy. They have now and then turned Corneille's sonorous alexandrines into glib operatic metres. They have also modified some of the scenes and added others; but in the latter process they have in most instances merely carried out the potentialities of the original drama. Corneille was hampered by the "unities," and everything that could not by any stretch of probability be located in the "Palais de Félix" had to be relegated to the narrative. Thus the destruction of the pagan statues by Polyeucte and Néarque is somewhat tamely related by Stratonice, while in the opera it forms one of the most effective scenes. For this and

similar changes no reasonable fault can be found with the skilful librettists, who, as we said before, have strictly adhered to the general outline of Corneille's plot. As to the adaptability of that plot to musical requirements, very different opinions may be formed. Some critics may regret the total absence of the amatory element. As in Beethoven's "Fidelio," the hero and heroine are husband and wife, wholly devoted to each other; for the first meeting of Pauline with Sévère, the lover of her youth, at once shows that on her part the early flame is extinguished. In the case of a composer, so eminently capable of passionate utterance as M. Gounod has shown himself to be in "Faust" and elsewhere, this peculiar nature of the plot is not without its drawback. But, on the other hand, it is almost a relief to have the uniform lovemaking of the operatic stage for once abandoned for the sublime motives of duty and religious exaltation. "Quand on passe de 'Faust' à 'Polyeucte,'" one might modify the introductory sentence of Voltaire's celebrated "Preface," "on se trouve dans un monde tout différent; mais les grands musiciens, ainsi que les grands peintres, savent traiter tous les sujets." To what degree M. Gounod has in the present instance proved himself to be a "grand musicien" it is now our duty to inquire.

The great contrast which pervades the whole

work and forms the background of the individual characters is, as we indicated before, that between Paganism and Christianity. This contrast is foreshadowed in the overture, which, for that reason, deserves more detailed notice than its length or its structure would at first sight seem to call for. For a professedly semi-religious work, it must be owned that the opening seems remarkably spirited, not to say worldly. A short phrase in G minor, of a marked rhythmical character, commences the piece and continues for about twenty bars, modulating into various keys, and leading ultimately to a suave cantabile phrase in the remote key of B natural, of which in all essentials it is the scale, commencing with the dominant. Thence we proceed to G and back again to the original theme in G minor. After a few bars, however, this is relieved by a charming though somewhat commonplace melody in B flat, of a graceful dance-like rhythm. Whatever may have been the significance of the two first-named themes, there is no doubt that here we have to deal with the half-plaintive sensualism of decaying Paganism, and this impression is fully confirmed when, after a brief resumption of the rhythmical motive, still in the original key, we hear the solemn chords of a chorale, which in a *largo* played fortissimo throughout, brings the overture to a triumphant close. The chorale, as a musical form, belongs

essentially to the Reformation period, and its peculiar sentiment, as well as its tonal system, were unknown to the early Christians. But Protestant composers, such as Bach and Mendelssohn, use it frequently as the musical equivalent of the Christian community, speaking, as it were, collectively. Of the association of ideas thus established Gounod has justly taken advantage in the present instance, and the final victory of Christianity could not have been rendered more forcibly than by the bright G major of the chorale after the minor keys and tremulous rhythms of the preceding themes.

The first act opens with a chorus of waiting-women, who are accompanying their domestic work with the gentle measures of a choral song in E flat. To them Pauline relates how she dreamt that Polyeucte, her beloved husband, was received among the hateful new sect named the Christians, and how the thunder of the Supreme Jove punished his sacrilege. A dream is a not uncommon occurrence in opera, and M. Gounod is fully equal to the emergencies of the case. Pauline's narrative is a most effective piece of declamation, and the chorus does not fail to chime in with an appropriate "O sombre vision, présage menaçant," to the sombre chord of the diminished seventh. Neither does it detract from M. Gounod's claim to original invention that here he borrows Wagner's device of

the "representative theme," which by this time has become the common property of dramatic composers. The accompaniment to Pauline's description of the baptism is the same theme which embodies Polyeucte's enthusiastic prayer after the real ceremony (p. 145 of the score), and it frequently recurs in the course of the drama. Next follows the duet between Pauline and Polyeucte, in which the loving wife gives utterance to her anxious fears for the fate of her husband, which he in vain tries to quiet. In it also Polyeucte announces the arrival of the victorious Sévère, believed to have been slain in battle, and receives his wife's confession of her former passion, long since merged in the feeling of conjugal affection. The sentiments of the pair uttered on this occasion are, no doubt, noble and highly commendable; but there is little in music that could add to their moral value; and the composer, accordingly, has produced a duet very respectable as a piece of vocal writing, but not in any way striking. The repetition of the first theme in the ensemble of the two voices (p. 28) may be mentioned as the most effective part of the duet. Here Gounod's invariable skill as a vocal writer has not failed him. A short ritornel in E minor which closes the duet well depicts Pauline's feeling at seeing Polyeucte depart with his Christian friend, Néarque.

The second "tableau" transfers us from the domestic

hearth to the Forum. Sévère returns victorious from a war with the Scythians, and enters the Armenian capital amid the welcoming shouts of a festive multitude. M. Gounod's religious purpose has not deterred him from exhibiting the pomp and circumstance of the stage in their utmost splendour, and in the present opera, as in the "Queen of Sheba," what might be termed decorative music plays a prominent part. The "Marche Triomphale" opens with a short orchestral introduction, mingled with the exclamations of the crowd. With the entrance of the soldiers (p. 37) the march proper begins, and is continued by the orchestra for some time, till at last the jubilant chorus falls in with a deafening "Honneur et gloire à toi." The whole forms a very effective, if not very refined and original, piece of music. To the last two epithets the next following number has a decidedly better claim. It is the quartet in the course of which Sévère is informed of the loss of his mistress. The way in which the four voices commence singly and in broken utterances, till at last they unite, the chorus also joining in, is musically as effective as it is psychologically appropriate. The triumphal theme, taken up again by the chorus, brings the first act to a brilliant close.

The second act opens again with a "*chœur de fête*," but of a very different nature from that heard last. We recognise at once the dance-like theme in B

flat from the overture, and find that its gentle strains serve to accompany a chorus sung in front of the temple of Vesta. The theme has been sufficiently characterised before. Over the next number, Sévère deploring the loss of his mistress in a *cavatine*, we can pass briefly. Pieces of this kind are very welcome to the singer, but they have no connection whatever with the course of the drama. A similar concession to popular taste M. Gounod has made in the very pretty *barcarole* sung by an irreverent young Roman named Sextus, and the applause which is said to have greeted the piece was anything but complimentary to the dramatic composer. Some excuse, however, might be found in the contrast which the musician probably wished to establish between the pagan love-song and the stern character of the religious ceremony immediately following. Before we come to this scene, the climax of the second act, and perhaps of the opera, we must briefly mention the charming song offered by Pauline at the shrine of Vesta, which in its simplicity reminds one of Gluck's treatment of classic subjects. M. Gounod could not have chosen a better model.

The space at our disposal compels us to limit our further remarks to a few of the most prominent features of the remaining acts. Among such we count, in the second act especially, the baptism of Polyeucte, more than once referred to. It is, per-

haps, one of the most elaborate pieces of ensemble the French lyrical stage can show, and in it M. Gounod has displayed genuine religious fervour, together with artistic workmanship of the highest order. The name of the Saviour, as successively pronounced by all on their arrival, is replete with reverence, and of equally admirable effect is the *canto fermo* intoned by the priest and taken up by the pious multitude. Polyeucte's prayer (p. 145), anticipated in the first scene of the opera, also is admirably conceived. An analysis of the elaborate finale it would be vain to attempt.

The third act, which is largely taken up by symbolic dances and other pageantry, is chiefly remarkable for another elaborate finale descriptive of the destruction of the images of the gods by Polyeucte and Néarque. From a musical point of view, however, the piece is not very satisfactory; for although the treatment of the chorus is massive and effective, there is little attempt at refined polyphonous writing. His mastery of that difficult art, M. Gounod, on the other hand, displays to the greatest advantage in the duet between Polyeucte and Pauline which forms the climax of the fourth act. In one passage the two voices, together with the accompaniment, produce a contrapuntal effect worthy of any old Italian master (p. 290). In the fifth and last act we meet with several themes familiar to us from the overture.

The "rhythmical" theme in G minor is here found to represent the multitude clamouring for the death of Polyeucte, while the "suave" theme in B occurring here at first in E flat stands for the suffering but triumphant martyr himself (p. 311). In this act also occur the celebrated lines, slightly modified from Corneille, in which Pauline avows her readiness to die in her husband's faith :—

> "Je vois, je sais, je crois ; je suis désabusée ;
> Je suis Chrétienne enfin, et je meurs avec toi."

It must, however, be confessed that the musical rendering of these words seems hardly equal to their import. But it is very possible that from the lips of a great singer the music may produce the same effect as did the spoken words enounced by the immortal Rachel. And with a similar reservation we wish that all the remarks should be accepted which we have ventured to offer. No study of the score, however careful, can supply the vivid impression of an adequate performance on the stage. We trust that by the light of such the reader will have an early opportunity of testing the justice of our cursory observations.

THREE FRENCH OPERAS.

III.

LE ROI DE LAHORE.

(From the *Times*, June 30, 1879.)

MASSENET'S new opera, the Italian version of which was played for the first time in England at Covent Garden on Saturday night, may be judged from two very different points of view, and the amount of merit granted to it will vary accordingly. If we look in an opera for the emanation of highest dramatic pathos combined with striking originality of melodic invention, and in connection with it of formal development, we most certainly shall be disappointed in Massenet's work. If, on the other hand, we are satisfied with flowing, though not very deep or very new, melodies expressive of the sentiments common to heroes and heroines of the lyrical stage, with admirable musical workmanship aided by gorgeous scenery—with a work, in short, after the model of the *grand opéra* as established by Meyerbeer and Halévy, the "Roi de Lahore" will command our approval and in parts our admiration.

But before speaking in detail of the music, it will be necessary to give a brief outline of the story which it serves to illustrate. Naïr, the heroine, a priestess of Indra, has inspired an unholy passion in Scindia, the all-powerful Minister of Alim, king of Lahore, who claims her hand from Timur, the high priest. In the conversation between the two men which ensues, it transpires that Scindia suspects Naïr of receiving the visits of a stranger in spite of her sacred vow, and when questioned by him, Naïr herself confesses her strong but pure love for a youth who, at the sound of the evening prayer, enters the temple nightly by a secret door. Scindia promises secrecy and forgiveness on condition that the girl will follow him as his wife, but this Naïr firmly refuses to do, whereat her disappointed lover denounces her to the priests and priestesses, who assemble at the sound of the sacred gong. Death will be her punishment; but before it is inflicted the companion of her guilt must also be discovered, and for that purpose the priestesses intone the evening hymn, at which signal the secret door opens and lets in King Alim himself. The state of affairs is now entirely changed, and Naïr from a culprit converted into a royal bride. Even Timur, the priest, cannot oppose the will of his sovereign, who, to pacify the gods, promises at once to do battle with the Mahomedan armies invading the kingdom.

Thus among warlike and festive songs closes the first act, Scindia only vowing secret revenge.

In the second act we are in Alim's camp. A battle has been fought, and the king's army is beaten and he himself wounded to death. This opportunity Scindia uses for sowing treason among the fugitive soldiers, who, abandoning their king, proclaim him ruler of Lahore. Only Naïr refuses to forsake the unfortunate Alim, and it is not till after his death that by force she is compelled to follow the usurper. In the natural course of things, "Il Re di Lahore" would now be an opera without a hero and a tenor. But such a contingency had to be avoided at any price, and M. Gallet, the librettist, not satisfied with a single *deus ex machina*, accordingly introduces a whole system of heavenly machinery. When the curtain rises for the third time, we are in the heavenly abode of Indra, the supreme god, who is surrounded by minor deities and the spirits of the blessed. The songs and dances of houris and other celestial maidens enliven the scene, which seems to draw its inspiration from the Koran rather than from the Vedas. Alim, whose spirit is soon discovered approaching the throne of Indra, alone refuses to take part in the universal joy. Amid the beauties of paradise he remembers Naïr, and his ardent prayer is to be once again united with her. This prayer Indra grants, and in the fourth act

Alim, restored to life, is at Lahore to thwart the designs of the treacherous Scindia, who is just on the point of crowning his success by the possession of the unwilling but powerless Naïr. A stormy meeting of the rivals ensues before the assembled people, and Alim is saved from the wrath of the tyrant by the priests, who give him shelter in the temple of Indra. Here, in the fifth and last act, he has a secret meeting with Naïr, but their plans of flight are frustrated by the vigilance of Scindia, who enters the temple followed by his soldiers and threatens Alim with second death. Rather than become the tyrant's wife Naïr seeks destruction by her own hand, and, according to Indra's decree, her lover joins her in death. In the final tableau the pair are seen ascending to the abode of bliss, while the baffled Scindia, according to the English version of the libretto, "regards them with deep emotion, then prostrates himself, hiding his face in his hands."

The weakness of this plot from a dramatic point of view is at once apparent. The characters are little more than shadowy conventionalities, the celestial interlude is obviously introduced for the purpose of scenic display alone, and the air of unreality pervading the whole is intensified when the resuscitated Alim appears among the living people in his own form as if nothing had happened, and continues to

act and to suffer exactly as he had been wont to do. But perhaps it is unfair to judge by the canons of common sense a libretto which contains at least some effective situations and no end of opportunities for celestial and terrestrial marches, pageants, dances, and other attractions of the operatic stage. That on these the success of the work must to a great extent depend the management at Covent Garden had fully recognised, and nothing more splendid, and for the greater part more tasteful, could be imagined than the way in which the piece is put upon the stage. . . . Among the soloists, the highest praise is due to M. Lassalle, the representative of Scindia, which part he created at the first performance of the work in Paris two years ago. M. Lassalle is a dramatic artist of the first order, and his conception of every character he assumes is marked by that unity without which the impressions of truth and reality cannot be produced. His task in this instance is of more than ordinary difficulty, for Scindia is a strange mixture of heterogeneous elements. He is ambitious, and willing to sacrifice his loyalty and his love to this master-passion, but after success has once been achieved he gives way to sentiment, and sings "O casto fior del mio sospir" to a melody as gentle and amorous as any Corydon could wish for. M. Lassalle preserved the right mean between these extremes; he was never truculent and never insipid. The music of the part,

also, which is written for a high baritone and very trying to the voice, was admirably rendered, and the cantilena already referred to may be called the success of the evening. The chief interest of the performance, therefore, curiously enough, centred in the villain of the piece. . . .

The general character of M. Massenet's music has already been indicated at the beginning of this notice. Competence and even mastery of workmanship are displayed in the instrumentation as well as in the vocal portions of the score. On the other hand, genuine flow of melody, and, indeed, spontaneous inspiration of any kind, are all but wanting. Comparing, for example, "Il Re di Lahore" with Bizet's "Carmen," we find in the former equal skill of technical handling, but without that indefinable something which, for want of a better name, is called genius. From a dramatic point of view, M. Massenet is most deficient in the power of characterisation. To say nothing of such a type as Indra, the god, whom only creative genius of the highest kind could call into real life, and who, in M. Massenet's score, is a musical nonentity, there are few individual features even in so marked and so important a character as that of Scindia. His chief air, as we said before, is sentiment pure and simple, and in the great ensemble of the second act, his utterance ("Il tuo regno") is marked by a melo-

dious sweetness wholly at variance with the words he speaks as well as with his character generally. This ensemble and the finale of the first act are admirably constructed, the cantabile phrase in the former, "Vien ah vien," being especially of admirable effect. But here again, and generally in the concerted pieces, the single components are not sufficiently kept apart, and the composer's method is one of massing rather than of grouping. Local colour has only in rare instances been attempted by M. Massenet, and the graceful music to which the houris of the Indian paradise perform their gyrations is mainly founded on a suave theme in E flat, which soon assumes the rhythm of a valse. The idea of the Asparas dancing a German walzer is about as appropriate as that of Venus stepping to the measure of a mazurec, as she is made to do in Gounod's "Polyeucte." There is, it is true, in M. Massenet's score a so-called "national Indian air" (of, by the way, anything but Indian tonality), with very charming variations. But these were omitted at Covent Garden. The most characteristic numbers of the score are, perhaps, the evening hymn sung by the priestesses of Indra ("Dell'ombre") in the first and again in the finale of the last act, and the very graceful and quaintly-instrumented scene in Alim's camp at the beginning of the second act. Very powerful, and indeed dramatic in the highest sense,

is the so-called "Scena dell'Abandono" in the second act, founded on the theme which opens the overture and occurs more than once in the course of the opera. We finally mention a beautiful and broad theme in G minor, given to the orchestra in the last scene of the third act and in the *intermezzo* preceding the fifth act, and which is also turned to excellent account in an interpolated air of Naïr. In this theme, however, as, indeed, in more than one number of the score, the influence of Wagnerian *melos* is distinctly discernible. To a similar influence we must attribute M. Massenet's very skilful repetition of themes for the purpose of emphasising certain ideas or emotions. Readers interested in the matter we may ask to compare with each other pp. 73, 91, 117 and 175, and 213 of the Italian score, where instances of this interconnection of movements will be found.

To sum up, M. Massenet's opera, although not a work of genius proper, is one of more than common merit, and contains all the elements of at least temporary success. The reception it met with on Saturday augurs well for its immediate future at Covent Garden, a circumstance no doubt largely due to the excellent performance and *mise-en-scène.*

THE CHANCES OF ENGLISH OPERA.

(From *Macmillan's Magazine*, May 1879.)

MR. ROSA'S successful season at Her Majesty's Theatre has brought the question of the permanent establishment of English opera in London into the foreground once again. Thoughtful musicians and amateurs ask themselves, "Why should not we have an opera in our own tongue, sung more or less by our own people, and produced at least in reasonable proportion by our own poets and composers, such as the French and Germans, and even the Hungarians and Danes, have had for years?" The late operatic season has proved two things:—First, that singers English-born, and partly at least English-trained, are quite able to do justice to some of the most difficult works of the international repertoire; and, second, that under an intelligent and enterprising management English opera need by no means spell "Ruin." By these two facts the chance of future and of permanent success may be considered safely established; but intelligence and enterprise are not alone sufficient to account for a success

which is in strong contrast with the anything but brilliant results of previous seasons at the Lyceum and the Adelphi. The causes of this change must be looked for elsewhere, and it is of these causes, considered from a broadly historic point of view, that the present article is intended to treat.

The most superficial observer of social and artistic matters in London cannot but have noticed the change which has of late years come over the spirit in which music is listened to and practised by English amateurs. Not only does the interest taken in it exceed that granted to all the other arts in conjunction, but the character of this interest itself is becoming more and more divested of the attributes of a fashionable pastime. A glance at the crowds which assemble to listen to Beethoven's quartets at St. James's Hall, and to his symphonies at the Crystal Palace, would be alone sufficient to establish the point. And in equal measure as the taste of our audiences has become more serious and refined, it has also broadened in scope. The exclusive admiration of Handel and Mendelssohn, on the one hand, and of the "school of the future," on the other, is gradually being merged in an intelligent appreciation of all good music to whatever school or country it may belong. But there are other signs of the times, if possible still more important. A glance at the rise which the national development

of music has of late taken in such remote countries as Russia and Norway, and the applause which the works of Tschaikoffski, of Grieg, and Svendsen, have met with all over Europe, naturally awaken the desire that England also should occupy her proper place amongst musical nations, and it has been justly recognised that for that purpose it is necessary not only to give due encouragement to the native talent already in existence, but also to prepare a healthy and congenial atmosphere for that yet to come. In this sense the agitation for a great central school of music after the pattern of the Paris Conservatoire is one of the most hopeful signs of the musical reawakening in England.

It is at such times of national art-revival that the demand for a national opera, in the sense above specified, becomes irresistible. The opera, as we at present understand the word, occupies a peculiar position in the history of music and of art generally. A combination of the drama and of music, it is as different, on the one hand, from spoken tragedy or comedy, as it is, on the other, from music pure and simple. The last-named arts have been derived from distinctly national sources; the drama from the old mysteries and miracle plays; the symphony and the artistic song from simple dance forms and popular ditties. But no such natural growth is observable in the opera. The Florentine dilettanti, Vin-

cenzo Galilei (the father of the astronomer), Jacopo Peri, and Emilio del Cavalieri, who in the sixteenth century cultivated *musica in stilo rappresentativo*, and became the founders of the modern opera, did so in connection with the great Renaissance movement of their time. They were intent upon reviving the classical drama with its rhythmical recitation and its choral interludes; and their efforts were, therefore, in the first instance, addressed to scholars and the upper classes generally. So great, however, was the love of music in Italy, and so abundant her production of musical genius, that the narrow limits of the original *dramma per musica* were soon expanded by a succession of men of genius, beginning with Claudio Monteverde, and extending to Rossini, Bellini, and Verdi. But its aristocratic and unpopular, or at least non-popular, character has in some measure remained attached to Italian opera. Especially is this the case in foreign countries, where the high price of the Italian importation practically excludes the multitude from its enjoyment.

Whatever their taste and their critical bias may be, musicians ought never to forget the enormous debt which the progress of the art owes to Italy. She not only produced great musicians herself, but also gave a stimulus to what latent genius there might be in other countries. Pelham Humphreys, the master of Henry Purcell, was himself the pupil

of Lully, an Italian by birth although a Frenchman by adoption. But the most casual glance at the music of Humphreys, Purcell, and other writers of the English school will show the important influence exercised on them by Carissimi. Of the great Roman master's paramount reputation in this country the following extracts from "Pepys's Diary," published for the first time in Mr. Mynors Bright's recent edition, may serve as evidence :—

"*22nd July* 1664.—Met (at his house), as I expected, Mr. Hill (my friend the merchant) and Andrews, and one slovenly and ugly fellow, Signor Pedro, who sings Italian songs to the theorbo most neatly, and they spent the whole evening in singing the best piece of musique counted of all hands in the world, made by Signor Charissimi, the famous master in Rome. Fine it was indeed, and too fine for me to judge of. They have spoke to Pedro to meet us every week, and I fear it will grow a trouble to me if we once come to bid judges to meet us, especially idle masters, which do a little displease one to consider."

The same inexhaustible source of amusing gossip and valuable information testifies to the fascination exercised by Italian opera on the amateurs of England, and at the same time throws an interesting light on the natural antagonism existing between the foreign and the national elements of music in this as in other countries. No excuse is needed for the quotation of the interesting extract, which moreover bears upon the subject in point :—

"*Feb.* 12, 1667.—With my Lord Brouncker by coach to his house, there to hear some Italian musique; and here we met

Tom Killigrew, Sir Robert Murray, and the Italian Signor Baptista,[1] who hath proposed a play in Italian for the opera, which T. Killigrew do intend to have up; and here he did sing one of the acts. He himself is the poet as well as the musician, which is very much, and did sing the whole from the words without any musique prickt, and played all along upon a harpsicon most admirably, and the composition most excellent. The words I did not understand, and so know not how they are fitted, but believe very well, and all in the recitativo very fine. But I perceive there is a proper accent in every country's discourse, and that do reach in their setting of notes to words, which, therefore, cannot be natural to anybody else but them; so that I am not so much smitten with it as it may be I should be if I were acquainted with their accent. But the whole composition is certainly most excellent; and the poetry, T. Killigrew and Sir R. Murray, who understood the words, did say most excellent. . . . He (Tom Killigrew) tells me that he hath gone several times (eight or ten times he tells me) hence to Rome to hear good musique; so much he loves it, though he never did sing or play a note. That he hath ever endeavoured in the late King's time and in this to introduce good musique, but he never could do it, there never having been any musique here better than ballads. And says 'Hermitt Poore' and 'Chiny Chase' (*sic*/—'Chevy Chase' is evidently meant) was all the musique we had, and yet no ordinary fiddlers get so much money as ours do here, which speaks our rudeness still. That he hath gathered out Italians from several courts in Christendome, to come to make a concert for the King, which he do give 200*l.* a year apiece to; but badly paid, and do come in the room of keeping four ridiculous Gundilows, he having got the King to put them away and lay out money this way. And indeed I do commend him for

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[1] Giovanni Baptista Draghi, the younger brother of the more famous Antonio Draghi, born at Ferrara; he accompanied the Princess d'Este, wife of James II., to England, where he wrote several operas, one, "Psyche," in conjunction with Matthew Lock (1672). The date of his death is unknown, but one of his operas was produced as late as 1706.

it; for I think it is a very noble undertaking. He do intend to have some times of the year these operas to be performed at the two present theatres."

But the influence of Italian music, and of Italian opera especially, was not limited to this country alone. Bach himself submitted to it, and the reputation of Handel, when he came to England, was, as every one knows, chiefly founded on the setting of Italian words to more or less Italian music. And the same state of things continued in Germany for more than half a century after his death. Hasse and Graun and Mozart, and even Gluck, wrote *opere serie* and *buffe* to order and by the dozen, in spite of their nationality and their individual genius. In the meantime, however, national music, to a great extent owing to the efforts of some of the masters above named, had gone its own way to a degree of perfection infinitely superior to that ever attained by the foreign product; and it may be said that, for the last century, Italian opera in Germany and France and other musical countries has had an essentially artificial existence, fostered by fashion, and apart from the real musical life of the nation.

The first country to throw off the foreign yoke, and to establish a thoroughly national style of operatic music, was France, and the history of this reaction is worth studying in more than one respect. Curiously enough the founder of French operatic music was

himself an Italian by birth, and, to some extent, by training. For although Lully was, at the age of thirteen, brought to France, and trained by French masters, his style, like that of his pupil, Pelham Humphreys, distinctly shows the influence of Carissimi. Lully's early attempts at dramatic writing were limited to pieces of incidental music to various ballets and plays—Molière's "L'Amour Médecin" and "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" amongst the number—in which the composer also appeared as an actor and dancer. Various lucrative court charges, and the exclusive privilege of performing opera at the Académie Royale de Musique of Paris, were the reward of Lully's successful efforts at amusing the Great Monarch.

In the meantime, French opera itself was as yet in an embryonic condition. In France, as elsewhere, opera was at first synonymous with Italian opera, having been introduced as early as 1645 by Mazarin, under whose auspices Strozzi's "La festa teatrale della finta pazza" was performed by an Italian troupe. It was not till sixteen years later that the Abbé Perrin proved the French language to be at all available for musical purposes by breaking through the absolute rule of the alexandrine, and writing what in the preface to his poems he aptly styles *paroles de musique ou de vers à chanter.* His musical collaborator was Robert

Cambert; and the joint production of these two men, named "La Pastorale," and performed for the first time at a private theatre in 1659, may be called the first French opera proper. To Perrin's untiring energy the foundation of the Académie de Musique, or, as we should say, "Grand Opéra," is due. Lully at first was antagonistic to the new enterprise, and used all his natural aptitude for intrigue and his court favour to injure his French rivals. It was not till after Perrin had quarrelled with his associates that Lully changed his tactics, purchased the privilege of performing operas from Perrin, and became the champion of the French music-drama —the possibility of which he had previously denied. It proves the potent spell of national French art, on the one hand, and Lully's pliable genius, on the other, that he, the Italian, became the founder of the national music-drama in France. That name, rather than opera, is applicable to such works as "Perseus," "Armida," and "Acis and Galatea." They are, in a manner, the musical complement of the French classical tragedy as represented by Corneille. In the place of Italian fioriture and cantilena the declamatory principle is here, for the first time, relied upon, and it is by this historic fact, rather than by their intrinsic beauty, that Lully's works claim the attention of modern musicians. How that principle, and French opera generally, were further developed by

Rameau, this is not the place to show. Of the twenty-two large works which he composed and produced after he had completed his fiftieth year, not a single one now remains on the boards, but their historic interest is, nevertheless, unimpaired.

In the meantime, Italian opera was by no means extinct in France, and it required an acute and prolonged struggle before the claims of French music, and of the French language as a medium for musical expression, were admitted by the majority of Frenchmen. Curiously enough, the leading literary men of the day took the side of the foreign movement. French opera and its representatives were from the first in little favour with the poets and journalists of the capital. Boileau hated Lully, and calls him "un bouffon odieux, un cœur bas, un coquin ténébreux," and Diderot, in his fictitious dialogue with the nephew of Rameau, shows little sympathy with that celebrated composer and bumptious and overbearing man. But the most dangerous and the most uncompromising antagonist of French music was Jean Jacques Rousseau. The "Lettre sur la Musique Française," and the shorter and more amusing "Lettre d'un Symphoniste," foreshadowing the manner of Berlioz, are nothing but the most violent diatribes against French and in favour of Italian music, in which instances of keen insight into the principles of dramatic composition are mixed up with the most grotesquely absurd application of

those principles to cases in point. There is much that is just in his objection to the irrelevant airs and *insipides chansonettes* with which the French interspersed their dialogue, and the detailed analysis of Armide's scena ("Enfin il est en ma puissance"), in Lully's opera of that name, is, in its way, a masterpiece of unrelenting criticism; but when, on the other hand, we read the rapturous praise of everything Italian and consider what the *Serva Padrona*, and Italian opera generally in the eighteenth century, really were, the unfairness of Rousseau's special pleading is but too apparent. The amusing wind-up of the article, which concentrates in a few sentences the venom of the preceding pages, must be quoted in the vigorous language of the original:—

"Je crois avoir fait voir qu'il n'y a ni mesure ni mélodie dans la musique françoise, parce que la langue n'en est pas susceptible; que le chant françois n'est qu'un aboyement continuel, insupportable à toute oreille non prévenue; que l'harmonie en est brute, sans expression, et sentant uniquement son remplissage d'écolier; que les airs françois, ne sont point des airs, que le récitatif françois, n'est point du récitatif. D'où je conclus que les françois n'ont point de musique et n'en peuvent avoir; ou que si jamais ils en ont une, ce sera tant pis pour eux."

It ought to be remembered that the author of these remarks was himself the composer of an operetta in French, and that he who compared *le chant français* to the barking of dogs wrote and composed two of the sweetest of the innumerable sweet chansons

transmitted to us from the eighteenth century, "Le Rosier" and "Que le temps me dure." But in the heat of argument, and in his eager desire to spite Rameau, Rousseau forgets even the productions of his own mind, of which he was more proud than of "Emile" or "La Nouvelle Héloïse."

Another point ought to be considered. Rousseau's criticism, although too sweeping, is by no means wholly unjust. Lully's recitation is dry and pompous, and Rameau's counterpoint pedantic. There is, indeed, no doubt that the French school would have succumbed in the struggle, if rescue had not come from a different quarter.

The arrival of Gluck in Paris, his difficulty at first in having his operas performed, his final triumph, and the great artistic commotion generally known as the struggle between Gluckists and Piccinists, are too familiar to musical and unmusical readers to require detailed mention. French music now, at last, had found a champion capable of holding his own against the best Italians. He was a foreigner, but his inspirations and his artistic principles were thoroughly French. If he had never come to Paris, French opera would never have become what it was and is; but neither would Gluck have been the Gluck we know, the author of the French "Alceste" and of "Iphigénie en Tauride." The phenomenon has been repeated in the cases of Meyerbeer and, if such

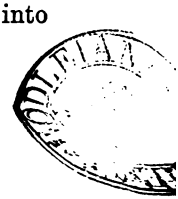
juxtaposition may be tolerated, of Offenbach. It proves the immense fascination of the French type of art, for good and for evil. In Gluck's case, the classic spirit, as revived by Corneille and Racine, and transferred to the lyric stage by Lully and Rameau, was the leading motive. The result is well known, and concerns us here only as far as it has reference to the national development of French opera. This national side of the question was fully acknowledged by the controversialists of the day. Clumsy adversaries occasionally taunted Gluck with his foreign origin, but judicious writers at once perceived that position to be untenable. They therefore contended, as one of his cleverest and most hostile critics has put it, "qu'à l'exception de deux ou trois airs qui sont dans la forme italienne, et quelques récitatifs d'un caractère absolument barbare, sa musique est de la musique française, aussi française qu'il s'en soit jamais fait, mais d'un chant moins naturel que Lulli et moins pur que Rameau." Rumours were started at the time, and have found their way even into modern histories, that Queen Marie Antoinette warmly adopted the cause of her countryman and old singing-master, and that the gentlemen of her court used, from the "coin de la reine," to applaud Gluck and to hiss Piccini. But Baron Grimm, an unimpeachable authority on court gossip, on the contrary, informs us that it was the

special desire of Marie Antoinette to retain Piccini in France.

Very curious, and never before sufficiently noticed, is the attitude which Rousseau observed towards Gluck. He was, as we have seen, in every way committed to the Italian side; but he was too keen, and, it is pleasant to add, too honest a critic to deny the genius of Gluck. The relation of the two great men seems from the first to have been friendly. When Gluck came to Paris, he submitted to the philosopher the score of his Italian "Alceste," asking him for such observations as might suggest themselves. Rousseau reluctantly undertook the task of studying the score, and proposed one or two alterations, which, it appears, were adopted in the French version. But before he had finished his task, Gluck withdrew his work, "without," as Rousseau somewhat peevishly adds, "asking me for my remarks, which had only been just begun." Such fragments as he had put down he afterwards embodied in a letter to Dr. Burney, and they are still worth reading as a specimen of minute and intelligent criticism. The objection on principle against French opera has of course been dropped, and along with it has disappeared the unbounded admiration for its Italian rival. Rousseau is now willing to acknowledge that "le récitatif ennuye sur les théâtres d'Italie, non-seulement parce qu'il est trop long, mais parce qu'il est mal chanté et plus mal placé."

The results of the foregoing remarks which concern us here are briefly: that the national music-drama in France was founded in antagonism to the Italian opera, although by an Italian, and that it was placed on a permanent basis by another foreigner at the time of a national revival in matters musical. That such a revival was taking place is sufficiently proved by the interest which not only men of literary eminence, such as Diderot, Rousseau, and La Harpe, but also the highest social circles, took in the artistic discussions above referred to. Even the events of the Revolution were unable to extinguish this interest, and it was during the darkest days of the Terror that the unrivalled school of national music, the Paris Conservatoire, was originated.

To follow the rise of national opera in other countries would far exceed the limits of this essay. Germany was early in the race, but her first efforts were feeble. Nothing of Reinhard Keiser's (born 1673) numerous operas written for Hamburg now remains; and the Elector Charles Theodore's vast scheme of founding a German opera at Mannheim proved abortive. Here also, by the way, an "Alcestis" played an important part. Wieland had supplied the libretto, but the composer, Schweitzer, was not equal to his task, and the opera, although brought out with great *éclat*, and trumpeted all over Germany as a great national event, soon sank into



[illegible] national [illegible]. It need hardly be said that the real founder of German opera was Mozart, although his chief works were written to Italian words. But the struggle between the national and the foreign element did not take an acute form till after the War of Liberation, which caused the feeling of German unity to [illegible] previously unknown. It would be interesting, but it would also require a large amount of space, to relate the valiant fight maintained by Weber against an unworthy rival as Meyerbeer at Dresden. The personal humiliation suffered by the great master at the hands of an obscure court and aristocracy may be read in the biography written by his son. Sir Julius Benedict also remembers many a sad tale to the same effect. But although the master died young and among strangers, his work survived and bore fruit. Without Weber there would have been no Méhul, and, perhaps, no Auber; without Weber the supreme power of Wagner might have taken a different, at any rate a more circuitous, route.

In minor and less cultivated countries the same process as that hitherto described may be observed with more or less important variations. In Mr. Gosse's recent volume on "Northern Literature" there is the following succinct account of the genesis of Danish opera:—

"The theatre in Kongens Nytorv took a new lease of vitality (towards the close of the last century), and, after expelling the French plays, set itself to turn out a worse cuckoo-fledgling that had made itself a nest there—the Italian opera. This institution, with all its disagreeable old traditions, with its gang of *castrati* and all its attendant aliens, pressed hard upon the comfort and welfare of native art, and it was determined to have done with it. The Italians were suddenly sent about their business, and with shrill screams brought news of their discomfiture to Dresden and Cologne. Then for the first time the Royal Theatre found space to breathe, and since then no piece has been performed within its walls in any other language than Danish. When the present writer heard Gluck's opera of "Iphigenia in Tauris" sung there some years ago with infinite delicacy and finish, it did not seem to him that any charm was lost through the fact that the libretto was in a language intelligible to all hearers. To supply the place of the banished opera, the Danes set about producing lyrical dramas of their own. In the old Hartmann, grandfather of the now living composer of that name, a musician was found whose settings of Ewald have had a truly national importance. The airs from these operas of a hundred years ago live still in the memory of every boy who whistles. From this moment the Royal Theatre passed out of its boyhood into a confident manhood, or at least into an adolescence which lasted without further crisis till 1805."

Making allowance for local differences, this account may be accepted as typical. Thus Alexej Verstovskij and Glinka became the fathers of Russian opera, the former with his "Asskold's Tomb" at Moscow in 1835; the latter, in the following year, at St. Petersburg, with his "Life for the Czar." Amongst their numerous successors are Rubinstein and Alexander Serov, the author and composer of "Judith" and other successful operas. The Russian school, although, like all other contemporary schools

of dramatic music, under the influence of Wagner, yet preserves sufficient originality of style to be distinguishable from those of other countries. In Bohemia the process was somewhat different. At Prague it was, in the first instance, German opera which superseded the decrepit Italian institution, to be in its turn followed by, or at least associated with, a national opera, of which Smetana, himself a successful composer, is the artistic leader. In Hungary matters have not progressed equally well. Ferencz Erkel's "Bank Ban" (his best work) and "Hunyady László," over which patriots at Pesth go into raptures, are, to all intents and purposes, Italian operas with Hungarian or pseudo-Hungarian airs skilfully interpolated. Mosonyi Mihály, another Magyar composer, has not yet had a fair trial; his best work, "Almos," having never been performed. Baron Bodog Orczy also has treated a Hungarian subject and used Hungarian rhythms in his opera, "The Renegade," the overture and ballet music from which have been recently performed in London. But it is said that the type of his music is too essentially German to please his compatriots.

And how about England? Where are her national singers and composers, and where the enthusiastic audiences who watch over the development of native talent with care and jealous zeal? The ques-

tion is, or at least was till quite lately, difficult to reply to, unless we accept "The Pinafore" as the ultimate acme of English art, and the Opera Comique in the Strand as its temple. Many and various causes might be alleged for this national deficiency. Sir George Bowyer, and other persons apt to rush in where students and impartial critics fear to tread, might complain of the national inaptitude of Englishmen for music, regardless of the fact that from the time of Queen Elizabeth to that of James II. England ranked among leading musical nations, both as regards production and intelligent reproduction and love of the art.

To the student of English musical history, the failure of English opera appears to have its origin in two events and in a name. The first event was the premature death of Purcell. That Purcell, had he lived, would have established a national school of music, and that that school would have been pre-eminently a dramatic one, no one acquainted with his work can deny. Unfortunately he died too soon to fully develop his own power or to give stability to such results as he had achieved already; and when, fifteen years after his death, Handel came to England, the interest of all lovers of music immediately centred in him, and the English school was too weak to resist the general, and, under the circumstances, perfectly

natural tendency. Still the case was by no means hopeless. Handel, as a dramatic composer, had hitherto followed Italian models, but, like Gluck, he was by no means impermeable to the influences of the country which he made his own. Germans themselves acknowledge that the great impulse which produced the oratorios is essentially English in character, and it may be assumed that if Handel had adhered to dramatic composition, similar causes would have produced similar effects, and Handel might have become the English Gluck. But, thanks to the intrigues of Italian rivals, working hand in hand with the religious bias of the country, this second chance of English opera also was to be foiled. The failure of "Xerxes," in 1738, may stand for the second event above referred to. Of the numerous attempts at establishing English opera on a permanent basis which were made during the last and present centuries, and amongst which the joint enterprise of Miss Louisa Pyne and Mr. W. Harrison was the most important, this is not the place to speak; neither is it the present writer's desire to judge in a summary manner of the numerous works by well-known English composers called into life on such occasions. Some of these have kept the stage to the present day, but none of them has become the legitimate model of what, without ex-

treme stretch of courtesy, could be called a representative school of English opera.

This leads us back to the third detrimental element—the name. English opera has, in the course of time, become identified with a kind of mongrel type of entertainment, consisting of detached pieces of music, interspersed with spoken dialogue, which, in its turn, seems introduced only to explain the reason for another song. To call this class of work English *par excellence* is as absurd as it is unhistoric. The same inferior type of dramatic music has existed, and to a great extent still exists, in most countries. The Germans, for example, have their "Singspiel." But no person in his senses would, for that reason, call Dittersdorf's "Doctor und Apotheker," or Lortzing's "Czar und Zimmermann," German operas proper. The existence of the spoken dialogue in such a work as Beethoven's "Fidelio" can be compared only to one of those formations in the human body which, according to Darwin, were of great use to our tree-climbing forefathers, but which now only serve the osseologist as a memento of a previous inferior type. This inferior type of the semi-musical drama has been fully recognised in France, where the line between Opera Comique and Grand Opera is actually drawn by the law. It was at the same time in France where, under peculiarly favourable circum-

stances, the first-named *genre* reached its highest, and indeed a very high, stage of development. On the French stage every singer knows how to declaim, and the transition from the word to the song is divested of that abruptness so jarring to the feeling and the ear in English theatres. At the same time the fact remains, that in France, as elsewhere, the spoken dialogue is absolutely unavailable for the purposes of the higher music-drama. Masaniello spouting alexandrines or Tannhäuser lapsing into prose would be voted unqualified nuisances all the world over. It is one of the great merits of the Italian opera seria to have demonstrated this fact beyond dispute. The *fiasco* of "The Golden Cross" last year, and of "Piccolino" three months ago, taught Mr. Rosa a wholesome lesson as to the merits of spoken dialogue at a large theatre.

To return to early English writers. So far from shunning the recitative, they were, on the contrary, most eager and most competent to treat it. Purcell's first dramatic attempt, "Dido and Æneas," although written by a boy and performed by boys, is full of the most striking instances of accurate and forcible declamation; *vide*, for instance, the short dialogue between Dido and Anna, and Dido's accompanied recitative, "Whence could so much virtue spring," with one of those curious attempts at

tone-painting to the word "storms" of which Purcell was so fond. And Purcell is not alone in this respect. Henry Lawes,

> "Who with smooth air could humour best our tongue,"

attends to every *nuance* of enunciation with as much care as Liszt or Robert Franz could do; and even so humble a worshipper as Mr. Pepys was not remiss in this respect. When, a short time ago, the present writer unearthed from among the treasures of the Pepysian Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge, the song "Beauty Retire," with the merits and genesis of which students of the Diary are so well acquainted, he was surprised at the skilful and truly dramatic way in which the pompous love-plaint of the tyrant is musically rendered. It is true that the spoken dialogue is, with a few exceptions, found in the early specimens of English opera, but this, as we have seen before, was the case in most other countries, and there is every reason to believe that the English school, had it lived, would have been among the first to rid itself of the intruder.

From Purcell and Lawes to Mr. Rosa's season at Her Majesty's Theatre, it is a long step; but there is little to detain one by the way. Of the aims and chances of this last enterprise a great deal has been said and written of late, and, instead of trying to

find new phrases for old thoughts, it will be as well to quote the words of a daily contemporary to this effect: —

"It may be alleged that an opera season conducted by a German, Mr. Rosa, and an Italian, Signor Randegger, and the novelties of which are a German and two French works ("Rienzi," "Carmen," and "Piccolino"), shows but little of the national English element. But it ought to be remembered that in France also it was Lully, an Italian, who formed the national school, and Gluck, a German, who saved it from the encroachments of the foreign element. Moreover, Mr. Rosa has, by word and deed, shown himself desirous to produce works by English composers, if it can be done with a reasonable chance of success. The most important thing for the present is to establish English opera—that is, dramatic music of all schools sung in the English language—on a permanent basis in London. If this has once been done, first-class English singers, and, in due course, English composers will be attracted by the chances of fame and gain thus offered to them, and the nucleus of a truly national theatre will be formed."

And in its summary of the results of the English season the same journal remarks:—

"It is easy to point the moral to be derived from this record of success ("Rienzi" and "Carmen") and of failure ("Piccolino") If English opera is to become a permanent, or at least an annual institution, at a large London theatre, it must not rely upon works of the ("Piccolino") type, no more than on constant repetitions of "Favorita," "Sonnambula," and other stock pieces of the Italian stage. What is wanted is an impartial and intelligent selection from the important operas of the international *répertoire*, without undue predilection for any particular epoch, school, or country, the only necessary condition being the elevated type and intrinsic value of the work chosen. "Carmen"— to return to the case in point—is as different from "Rienzi" as

can well be imagined, yet both have succeeded because both contain in a more or less developed state the germs of genuine human interest as regards dramatic impulse and its musical embodiment. A selection made on these principles, and executed in an artistic and generally efficient manner, would at once place English opera on a par with the national institutions of other countries."

And in that case, what, it may finally be asked, is to become of Italian opera in England? Is the London season to be no longer made musical by Italian melody and Italian vocalisation? Such an issue ought to be devoutly deprecated in the interests of both art and fashion. Neither need it be in the least apprehended. Italy will always remain the land of song and the school of singing; and that school all other musical nations will have to attend. It is by their neglect of this duty that German singers have lost that art of producing the voice without which the best natural gifts are of little avail. We, in this country, are more fortunately situated: the wealth of the nation and the laudable enterprise of our operatic managers attract the most eminent foreign singers to our shores, and the Italian opera may in the course of time become a most valuable complement to a National Conservatoire. Unfortunately, the purity of Italian singing itself has been much impaired of late years. Natives of all countries have invaded the Italian stage, and the undoubted, and in some cases supreme, value of French and

American and English and Swedish acquisitions is somewhat counterbalanced by the heterogeneous style of singing and of pronouncing the words introduced by less accomplished natives of those and other countries. If some of the English-speaking talent thus absorbed were returned to its natural channel, perhaps Italian opera, as well as English opera, would profit by the division of labour.

THE END.

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